

Independent PlayStation Magazine

PSM

INDEPENDENT
PLAYSTATION
MAGAZINE

JUN. 2006

The NEW
IPSM
The Best-Selling
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Got Better!

WE PLAYED IT!

GOD OF WAR II

10 PAGES ON PS2'S
BIGGEST GAME!

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PS3 SPECIAL REPORT

- LAUNCH DATE
- FREE ONLINE GAMING
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EXCLUSIVE LOOKS

SONIC
THE
HEDGE-
HOG



NEW!
**METAL
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SECTIONS!

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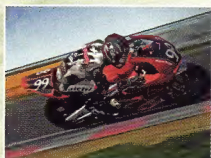
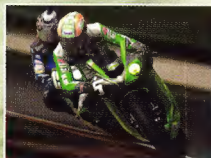
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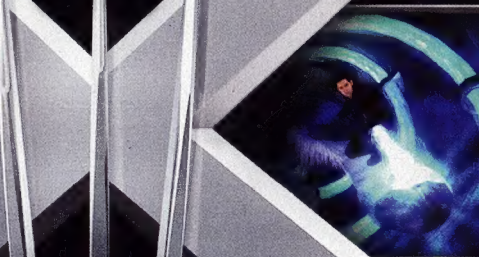


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THE OFFICIAL GAME



PlayStation 2

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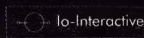
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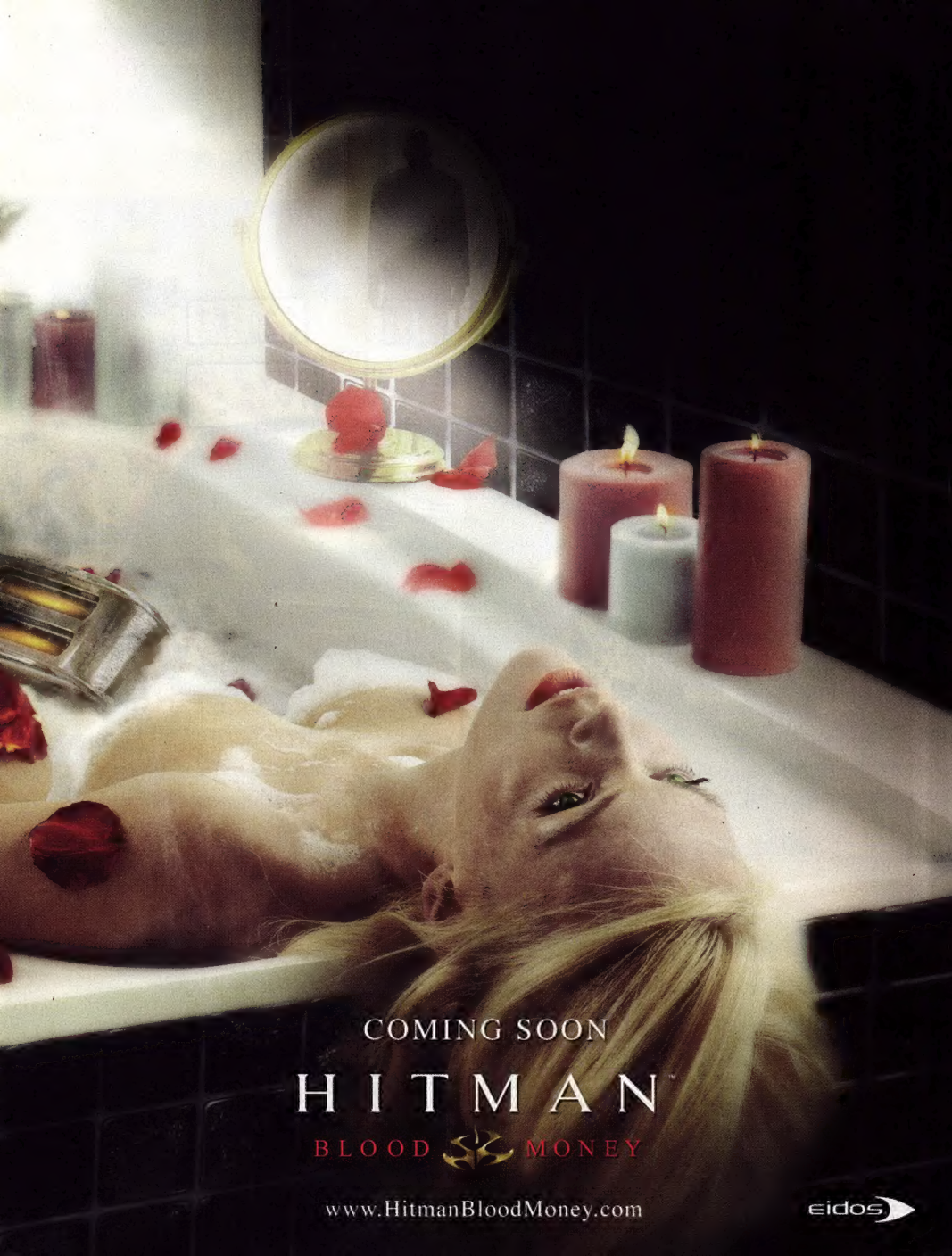
Blood
Intense Violence
Partial Nudity
Sexual Themes
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Use of Drugs



PlayStation 2



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Why We Make PSM

1 We love games
We know how exciting it is to find that rare game that will keep you playing for days without sleep. We also know how tough it is to pick that game out of the hundreds on sale. Buyers need expert guidance, but most game magazines read like an overstuffed catalog, only adding to the confusion.

2 Gamers need more from a magazine
A game magazine should cut through the clutter and point you toward what's important. It should focus on better coverage of the games that really matter. Above all, reading a magazine should be fun, entertaining – not work.

3 Nobody else does this, so we had to
We built PSM to be different. We make it faster and easier to find the games you'll love. Our independent status and veteran experts guarantee the most honest, accurate reporting. When you finish an issue of PSM, you're armed with the knowledge you need to enjoy games more than ever.



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The PSM Staff

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Chris Slate



The wait is over – welcome to the new PSM!

The issue you're holding took years of brainstorming, months of planning, and a final week of all-nighters to create. Why redesign? To make a more comfortable read... to give bigger and better coverage to the best games... to offer something more than a catalog-like collection of game pages... to make a magazine that's more for the older, dedicated gamers who will line up for a PS3... to provide the kind of magazine we feel gaming desperately needs, when nobody else will.

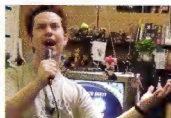
I couldn't be happier with the results; hopefully, you'll agree. Be sure to let us know what you think!

Ci



DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Kaiser Hwang

The Prince has this to say: "Happiness is a cigar called redesign," Kaiser concurs. After all, it's what's for dinner.



EXECUTIVE EDITOR Randy Nelson

Take a whiff – isn't that new magazine smell great? I hope you enjoy the new PSM! It's been a blast making it for you.



ASSOCIATE EDITOR Justin Cheng

It's been a tiring month, but when I look at this new PSM, I think all the hard work has paid off. I hope you like it!



MANAGING EDITOR Bill Donohue

We got the new redesign done by deadline... well, okay, almost by deadline. I'm still completely astounded, though...



ART DIRECTOR Chris Imlay

Whatever you like about the redesign, I did. Whatever you don't like, I didn't do. :~)



ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR Gary Liew

OK, months of suspense is over. Go ahead, check out our new design!

The PSM Office



PSM Intern Continues Footwear Boycott

Despite unseasonal record rainfall in the area, PSM intern Tom Holonen has continued to avoid the use of shoes.



[illegible]

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

PS2: **God Of War II**

SONY'S BIGGEST GAME ISN'T ON PS3





How do you out-do one of the best games ever? That's a question many sequels have tried to answer... and most have failed. It's also the question we had on our minds when we visited Sony to get our hands on the follow-up to our 2005 game of the year: *God of War*. It was a game we thought had reached the limits of the action-adventure genre, adult content, and the capabilities of the PlayStation 2 itself. From the moment we picked up the controller and hit start, however, we knew we had thought wrong.



WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE Kratos is going to see the world and meet new people... and kill them.

THIS IS HOW A SEQUEL SHOULD BEGIN:

Right where the game before it left off. No "One hundred years later," no "Since we last saw:" just Kratos, the god of war, sitting on his throne atop Mount Olympus looking like he should - looking like the king of

videogame badasses. Even if you one-hundred-percented the first game and unlocked all three of the possible plotlines for the sequel, you won't be prepared for the real story of *God of War II: Divine Retribution*.

There's no squaring off against your jealous brother (although the game's director,

and lead animator of the first game, Cory Barlog, coyly hinted that this may make it in the game), no modern day soldiers exploring Pandora's Temple, and no plotting of revenge against Zeus for abandoning you as a child. As Kratos, you're still haunted by your past deeds (killing your wife and child kind of sticks with you) and sick of the backstabbing gods you now have as an extended family. A still-secret sequence of events leads to Kratos losing his godly powers, and he sets off not on a quest to murder a god, but to change his destiny altogether. It will take him to the very edge of the world (hey, there are still people who actually believe it's flat) to gain an audience with the Fates: three sisters responsible for the destinies of all beings, mortals and gods alike.

TAKING FLIGHT

Too often, the coolest parts of many games happen in cinema sequences, or so believe the game's designers (we tend to agree). So instead of watching a canned movie of Kratos zipping off to his far away



WHIP IT The Blades of Chaos are gone. Kratos now wields the Blades of Athena.

destination, you take him there. Seeing as how the game is based on the myths of ancient Greece, there's no better way to get around than on the back of the winged horse, Pegasus. That's where our hands-on time with the game began.

As Kratos, you're heading for a distant temple, high above the ocean astride his flying steed. However, these definitely aren't the friendly skies; all sorts of enemies stand between Kratos and the Fates, and, while airborne, some of them are gryphon riders (that's a half-eagle, half-lion, all nasty).

Any doubt that the game would take the easy, more-of-the-same route of most sequels quickly flew out the window at this point. Using the same set of controls as the first game, we could strike out at the riders with Kratos's new Blades of Athena. Getting closer to the gryphons, we could actually leap onto them, gut their riders, slice off their wings, then leap off – being caught by Pegasus as it swoops in from off screen. It's even more thrilling in motion than it sounds, and it's just as easy to do as any of the elaborate-looking action scenes from the first game.

UNEXPLORED TERRITORY

Apart from a brief – some would say far too long – journey through Hades and some time on the Aegean Sea in the first game, Kratos's adventure

mainly took place in Athens and inside an arid desert temple. *God of War II* will feature much more in the way of level variety. First stop: a overgrown, boggy temple engulfed by plants.

This temple is just one of many different places you'll explore on the way to the temple of the Fates, but it's the first one the game's creators are eager to show off. We don't blame them – it's amazing, both visually and in design. That's not unexpected considering that most of the

GRAND THEFT GRIFFON

Kratos comes under attack from griffon riders while racing towards his destination astride Pegasus. You can actually jump off your steed, kill the riders, de-wing their rides, then leap back onto yours!



SKY RAGE

To give players more combat choices, Kratos can enter into an elaborate mini-game to pick off griffin riders, or, as shown here, use his chained blade's reach to simply yank them off from a distance.



crew that made the first game is working on this one, and that it uses the same game engine. In other words, everyone is familiar with how things work, and how to best put everything to use. The team has gained numerous members wowed by the first game and eager to contribute to this one, including the lead level designer from Nintendo's *Metroid Prime* games (both of which were excellent).

FAMILIAR YET FRESH COMBAT

Arriving at this temple, we're introduced to the first wave of fodder – er, we mean enemies – on whom to put the game's control through its paces. Before picking up the controller, we'd been told by the game's designers that one of their main objectives was not to mess with anything from the first game that worked well.

Combat was definitely one thing that did, and it still does. In fact, it's immediately familiar, even if the many new ways Kratos sends his enemies to Hades aren't. Even though they've sworn not to fix anything that isn't broken, the folks making the game have definitely freshened things up. Immediately, we noticed that Kratos had more ways of throwing, killing, and tearing apart his enemies once he'd grabbed them. All of his animations were new, and they weren't the only things.



Q None of the magic from the first game is returning; instead we got to try out two new types provided by Kratos's yet-to-be-named "benefactors."

The first was ice magic, which — like all other magic attacks — can be powered up through three levels using red orbs. The most basic attack, a quick blast of ice shards, is performed by holding L2 and pressing Square. L2 plus X creates a swirling "shield" of ice orbs that damage anything that approaches you, but melt after time. L2 plus Circle is the most powerful form of this magic: a giant ice crystal forms in Kratos's raised hands, which can then be used to smash multiple enemies simultaneously. We also got to check out a "wind bow" that shoots, well, "wind arrows," and can be powered up to send whirlwinds cutting along the ground, and even generate a tornado that rips the limbs from every enemy in its path.

ON THE RECEIVING END

The boggy temple is crawling with a mix of familiar and all-new enemies. There are cyclopes, which in this area will use items in the environment as weapons (as they will in others). In this case, tree stumps become clubs. Taking down one of these behemoths in the first game meant wearing them down with normal attacks, then successfully winning a button timing mini-game of sorts to execute them in glorious gory fashion. That holds true in the sequel, but it's even gorier. As



in "wrench their eye out, shove it in their mouth, and stab a blade down through their skull" gory. First, though, you have to contend with smaller enemies who like to hop onto the cyclops and control them. In this case, axe-wielding imps will seek out one of these giants and straddle its back. If the cyclops grabs you, you don't just take damage from the squeeze; the imps will crawl down its arm and hack at you. Luckily, you can prevent this by killing the imps first. Walling on the cyclops will lodge Kratos's blades into its shoulders, then rapidly pressing circle (now used for all "button mashing" actions) will pull their chains in tight, forcing

NOT A CYCLOPS



CYCLOPS

Two eyes, but glasses.



SOLID SNAKE

Two eyes, but lack display.



SIX

Two eyes, but not a cyclops.



**WRENCH THEIR EYE
OUT, SHOVE IT IN THEIR MOUTH,
& STAB A BLADE DOWN
THROUGH THEIR SKULL**

*** BRAINS
AND BRAWN**

The new
cyclopes will
use objects
from the levels
as weapons.



*** EYE-YI-YH** The new kill sequence for this type of cyclops is far more gory.

LONG-HAIRED UNDEAD ARE A DIME A DOZEN

ALL CHOKED UP

Kratos will still grab enemies when you press Circle. Now, however, they can be thrown much more precisely at other targets, which can be toggled through using the right analog stick.

the imp off. It's then best to avoid the cyclops and take out the smaller guy – preferably by grabbing him, tearing off his arm, and using one of his axes to split him down the middle.

Piles of bones form into living skeletons in this level, and long-haired undead are a dime a dozen. The entire place, as it turns out, is ruled over by Medusa's sister, a giant gorgon whose face can be seen on our cover. She's grotesquely large, bare-chested (not, in this case, a good thing by any means), and one of the game's mid-bosses. Yes, there will be more bosses this time around (though the designers aren't saying exactly how many), plus some lesser enemies that still put up bigger-than-average fights. They



CHOICES, CHOICES Throw him, cut him in half, or punch him (a power orb)

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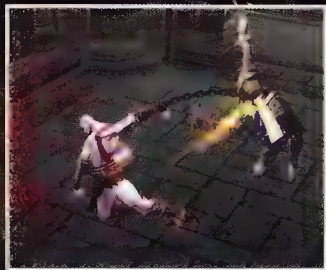
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MORE THAN WEAPONS

As in the first game, Kratos can use his blades to toss enemies around, but in the sequel he can also grab and pull objects, and grapple onto certain "hooks" to swing over chasms.



■ **WRENCHING...** each head off the Cerberus involves three mini-

GOES also, as is the case with this gargantuan gorgon, provide you with useful items when defeated (exactly what you get from her is still a secret).

NEW PLATFORMING CHALLENGES

We do know of one item – an ability, actually – that you'll earn after winning a fight. During the game, you'll cross paths with many characters from the first *God of War*, sans Ares, of course. Some are out to change their fate, much like Kratos.

Others are familiar figures from Greek mythology, and one of them is Icarus.

In the myths, this guy made his own wings using feathers and wax but flew too close to the sun. We're not sure

how it plays out in the game, but Kratos and Icarus square off, and our tattooed Spartan comes away with wings. They sprout by doing a triple-jump (pressing X three times) and allow you to glide for a short period of time (until the feathers all fall off). Using them factors heavily into platforming in this game, as does using the Blades of Athena to swing from grapple points (as well as pull objects). Combine the two, along with updrafts that let Kratos gain altitude using the Icarus wings, and the platforming "obstacle course" we went through wipes the floor with the tedious spinning blades of Hades from the first game. By the way, the game's director has promised us that spinning blades are out for the sequel.

EVEN MORE WEAPONS, MOVES, AND ENEMIES

The game's designers are very keen on making the combat just as thrilling as in the first game.



for beginners, but they also aim to give it more depth for experienced players. One way they're doing this is by devoting the R2 button to switching between physical weapons (they're not saying what they are, or how many to expect just yet) on the fly. You can also move Kratos (but not dodge) while holding the magic button (L2), making it possible to work magic and weapon switches into attack combos. It's similar *In many respects to Devil May Cry 3*, but cool-looking and -feeling combos were much easier to perform in our time with this game.

After checking out the swamp temple, we were privy to a sneak-peek at the home of the Fates, which is a stark contrast to the vine-covered ruins we'd fought through earlier. This area looked more like Mount Olympus from the end of the first *God of War*, and gave us a chance to try out Kratos's new wall and ceiling climbing using his twin blades.

Areas on the temple's interior and exterior walls were clearly compromised, the stones fallen away leaving a path for us to climb. Like hot knives into butter, we plunged his blades into the rocks and climbed (you

can also slide down quickly by holding R1). While climbing, we came to a point that seemed impossible: the area overhead was jutting out. Very smoothly, Kratos stabbed one blade after the other into the underside, transitioning from climbing the wall to hanging from above, then back to climbing vertically. It worked great.

Another area gave us a taste of fighting enemies while hanging from the ceiling: grabbing them with Circle and tossing them onto spikes below should be mighty fun. Also, we were promised that fighting on ropes would return from the first title... improved, of course.

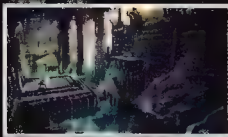
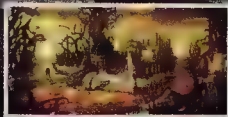
Last stop on this tour of the epic sequel-in-the-making was an encounter with a new version of the three-headed cerberus enemy. This is a very formidable foe, since it actually



HIT THE CEILING
Climbing on the ceiling isn't new to action-adventure games, but Kratos can engage in elaborate combat up there — he can even throw enemies to their deaths below.



21 Kratos now uses his enemies' own weapons to cleave them in twain.



*** SERIOUS BUSINESS**
From this point on, the store releases themselves have been a consistent workhorse for the series.

requires three mini-game sequences to vanquish (one for each head). It's a good thing, then, that it doesn't spring up until late in the game.

GOD OF MORE

It's not often – in fact, it's almost never – that we play a game, let alone a sequel, this early on that feels so solid (it's not due out until next spring). To that, we say that the developer's mantra of sticking with what worked in the first game and going from there seems to be the right one. They're not backing off of the mature content, either – not by a mile. They're not going for actions or situations that would seem inappropriate to the game world, but they're already finding themselves asking whether certain things might earn the game an Adults Only rating (it won't; from what we've played, it's a hard "M").

Even though the PS3 will be out by the time the game is released, we can honestly say that *God of War II: Divine Retribution* is going to turn plenty of heads when it hits next spring... for all the right reasons. It's bigger, bloodier, and bursting with new ideas – and isn't that just what you were hoping for from this sequel? **RANDY NELSON**

“THERE'S NO
BACKING OFF
OF THE MATURE
CONTENT.”

SHONEN JUMP'S
NARUTO
ULTIMATE NINJA



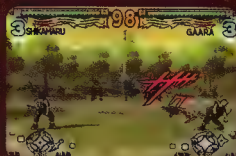
Increase your chakra and unleash multi-level super attacks to ascend the ranks and become a full-fledged ninja.



Fight as one of over 12 playable characters to complete missions and unlock tons of bonus content.

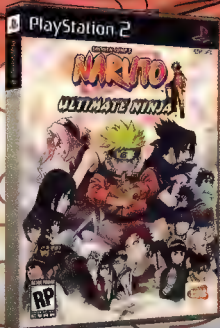


Switch between 12 interactive stages mid-combat while performing powerful ninjutsu moves as seen in the hit television series.



Use a variety of weapons, close combat or call on support characters to assist with super attacks or drop off power-ups.

**DO YOU HAVE
WHAT IT TAKES
TO BECOME THE
ULTIMATE NINJA?**



PlayStation 2

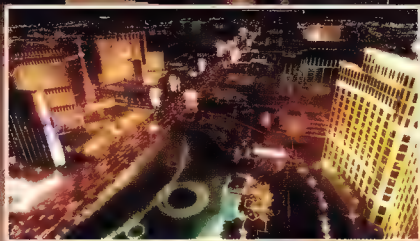
SHONEN
JUMP



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PS3: Rainbow Six: Vegas

UBISOFT SHOWS US THE FUTURE OF SHOOTERS

*** SIN CITY**

We don't really like going to Vegas, but damn, we may just change our minds...

*** CRAZY**

BEAUTIFUL. Never underestimate the power of visuals and how they can fully immerse you in a virtual world.



AVAILABLE
To Be Announced
TYPE
Shooter
MULTIPLAYER
Yes
ONLINE
Yes
ESRB RATING
Rating Pending
PUBLISHED BY
Ubisoft
MADE BY
Ubisoft Montreal

“KILLS DO NOT COME EASY IN THE WORLD OF RAINBOW SIX”



As those who have played *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter* are

now acutely aware, next-generation consoles are going to do wonders for the real-time simulation of war. Certainly, it's an argument that could be made for any genre: more processing power and better graphic chips are going to make nearly any game in any genre that much better. With their heavy emphasis on realism – and equally heavy reliance on the sort of graphical effects being built into the eye-blistering graphics hardware of next-gen machines – war games are perhaps the best visual proving ground for a new console. Enter *Rainbow Six: Vegas*. What *GRAW* did for futuristic, large-scale military operations, *Vegas* hopes to do for present-day special ops. As the title

not-so-subtly implies, the game is taking the fight against terrorism to Sin City. The bad guys have gotten past the good folks at Homeland Security, it seems, and it's up to your able squadron of justice surveyors to put more lead in their bellies. Las Vegas is certainly a city ripe for warfare; the endless layers of excess make for plenty of ambient destruction, and the perfect playground for a game of hide and go die. It's surprising, actually, that it hasn't been done before – though after having a look at what Ubisoft is doing with their title, it's perhaps for the

best – a recreation of the city on this scale has, quite simply, never before been possible. Case in point: the team has rendered the entire Vegas strip, along with the famous Fremont Street, in painstaking detail. That's more than four miles of relentless debauchery, streets densely packed full of nightclubs, casinos, hotels, massage parlors, and the like. It's an impressive sight, and properly demonstrates the rendering power of which the PS3 will be capable (it's worth noting that ridiculously high licensing fees mean that the casinos' interiors will not

K-PRIDE
Jung Park here is the sniper and computer hacker. We hear he's good at math, too.

023 be rendered in as much detail as their exteriors – or at all, in fact).

Given the significantly more complex geometry the PS3 hardware allows for, there's an all-new axis of evil to contend with – namely, a vertical one. You'll be scaling buildings, diving through skyscraper windows, and rappelling up and down walls, all in the name of killing bad guys (er... I mean, freedom. Yeah, freedom). Rappelling, fast-rope (quickly sliding down a rope and tightening your grip to slow the fall), and invert (upside-down) rappelling will all be part of your repertoire. It's like yoga, but with guns!

Not unlike other military-themed games of late (Epic's *Gears of War* comes to mind), *Vegas* necessitates that the player make smart use of environmental cover. This is no run-and-gun FPS: marble walls, slot machines, and many other obstacles must become protective shields against enemy bullets if you wish to



024 FUN FOR ALL A co-op mode has been confirmed for the game.

keep breathing. You'll also use blind fire and suppressing fire. When you do so, the action switches to a third-person, over-the-shoulder camera and then smoothly moves back to a first-person perspective when you're ready to start taking aim again. It's an impressively slick transition, and we can only imagine it will become more refined as development on the game continues.

Of course, the most obvious change as *Rainbow Six* transitions onto the next generation of consoles will be of a graphic nature – which, as you can see here, is significant.

While the title is still very early, the visuals are coming along at a steady clip. Unsurprisingly, the models and textures are a leap beyond what fans are used to on current-gen hardware. Even more impressive are the effects and subtle animations being used; smash through a window and watch as the glass splinters into thousands of tiny pieces, while very cool blur effects illustrate the chaotic haze of combat as you look out from behind cover.

When you do venture to take a peek, things won't get any better. Kills do not come easy in the world of *Rainbow Six*. **026**

PLAY NICE WITH OTHERS

As any *Rainbow Six* lover knows, it's the multiplayer action that keeps you coming back for more. Accordingly, a host of new options have been added to *Vegas*, including the same third-person use of cover as found in the campaign. Players will also be able to customize their character, ranging from gender to face paint, to camouflage styles and headgear... and then there's the gear: scopes, flashlights, suppressors – it's all here.

025 SWITCH STANCE

It looks like you'll be able to choose which side of the screen you're on in the over-the-shoulder view.





Pictured from left to right: LCDR Mark Simon, ETCM Eric Olis, BMC Dan Ames, BM1 Michael O'Connell, EN1 Jason Fetterman, EM2 Mark DiPietro, LT Lewis Baker, MM2 Sergio Rodriguez

navy.com/seals

Seal you have what it takes

and this will not change with *Vegas* – expect fewer, even more difficult enemies than in previous games in the series. The environments are chock full of various gambling kiosks, slot machines, storefronts, and other expendable items. Character models, as an up-close look demonstrates, are equally impressive. To capture the realistic movements of the soldiers, motion capture is being used extensively and applied to nearly every relevant animation in the game. While it takes many obvious liberties, *Vegas* is in

many ways a simulation – and Ubisoft appears to be properly sweating the details.

As we edge ever closer to photorealistic videogames, war simulations continue to raise the bar – and *Rainbow Six: Vegas* looks to be no exception. Though it's been in development for two full years, the game is still a little rough around the edges. Only time will tell if it's going to be ready soon enough to be a PS3 launch title. Either way, expect continued coverage in PSM as the game progresses along. **MICHAEL LEWIS**

CLEAN UP We're hoping the terrorists' bodies don't vanish when they die.



YOU'LL BE SCALING BUILDINGS, DIVING THROUGH SKYSCRAPER WINDOWS, RAPPELLING UP AND DOWN WALLS



THE DECLINE Rappelling will be a big part of your strategic options. Note your buddy hanging around through the window on the left.



DEFORMING ARTS See how the carpet ripples out like there was a shockwave? That's pretty hot.



RUNNING WILD A game is only as believable as its AI, so it's almost comforting to see the enemy on the left realize he's about eat some lead.



THREE AMIGOS Keeping the number of squad members down lets you care more about each of them.

WHAT A CHARACTER!

The squad is made up of three main characters: Your protagonist, Logan Keller, is the standard leading man - scruffy, slender, and not entirely unlike Sam Fisher. He's accompanied by Michael Walter, an African-American weapons expert, and Jung Park, a "sniper and computer hacker." Hey, it's just like real life!

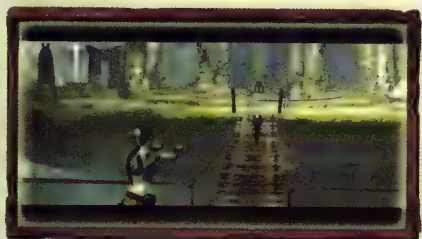
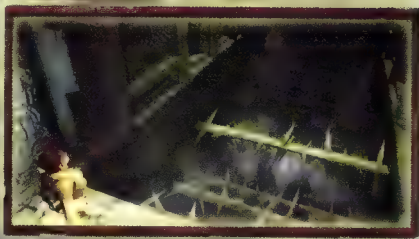
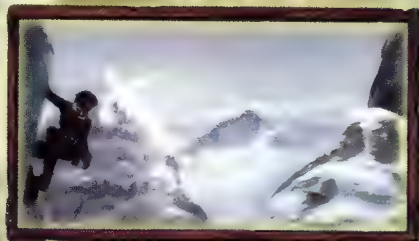
SEEING IS BELIEVING

"IT'S AMAZING!"
PSM BUY OR DIE AWARD
PSM

"4.5 OUT OF 5!"
OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"AWESOME GAME OF THE MONTH,
5 OUT OF 5 STARS"
STUFF MAGAZINE

"THIS IS THE BEST LOOKING VERSION
OF LARA CROFT YOU'VE EVER SEEN."
IGN



Blood
Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence



PlayStation.2



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eidos

PS3: Sonic The Hedgehog

BACK TO BASICS & BACK ON TRACK



Poor Sonic. This year marks the hedgehog's 15th birthday, but the little blue speedster (and one-time rival of a certain pair of sibling plumbers) hasn't gotten a lot of love lately. Recent dregs like *Shadow the Hedgehog* and *Sonic Riders* have served more as nails in Sonic's coffin than any sort of salve. The old blue guy isn't pushing up daisies just yet, though: as the series jumps into the next generation with the aptly titled *Sonic the Hedgehog* (not to be confused with the original Sega Genesis game, though it would be rather difficult to make that mistake),

Sega and Sonic Team are being given an opportunity to resuscitate the ailing franchise.

Candy For The Buns

The most obvious thing that differentiates this *Sonic the Hedgehog* from its predecessor is just how much better the next-generation hardware makes the game look. While Sonic does not initially appear to be leaps and bounds better than his PS2 incarnations, he does sport exponentially more polygons than before, adorned with reflections and shadows that that technical masterpiece, *Shadow the Hedgehog*, was unable to

i info

To be announced

Action-Platformer

To be announced

To be announced

Rating Pending

Developed by

Sega

Published by

Sonic Team

► RISE OF THE MACHINES
It's nature vs. technology... or something.

THIS NEW SONIC DELIVERS,
AIDED BY A MOTION BLUR THAT FURTHER
ENHANCES THE **WHITE-KNUCKLE SPEED**

feel. The bottom line is this: Sonic the Hedgehog looks better than he did in any other game in the series. Period.

Speed's The Thing

Of course, the most pressing concern isn't the number of polygons in Sonic's left foot, but rather how *fast* the game

is. The series is known for its speed, even being marketed as the lightning quick, "blast processing"-powered alternative to Nintendo's comparatively leisurely paced *Super Mario World* way back when. Judging solely on what we've seen so far, this new *Sonic* delivers, aided by a motion

blur that further enhances the white-knuckle speed.

Back To Basics?

Unfortunately, we don't know anything about the plot – not that the story is a necessary component to a *Sonic* game anyway. As long as Sonic's running around at

SONIC'S SPEED

How fast is Sonic? Well, sonic speed (Mach 1) is approximately 761 mph at sea level, depending on temperature. Can Sonic really run that fast? Maybe.

INSANELY fast speeds and bashing bad guys, we'll be happy gamers. To be honest, that's all a *Sonic* game needs to be. There's really no need to pack the game full of secondary or even tertiary characters. Sometimes, simpler is better, and less is more.

Some Semblance Of Reality

That isn't to say that we want the game to be overly simplistic. Luckily, there are some tweaks to the formula, giving the game some modern sensibilities. No, Sonic isn't going to be packing a gun this time around in an effort to appeal to violence-minded youths, though the changes do involve the combat. Like so many other games these days, *Sonic the Hedgehog* will make use of the Havok physics engine, giving the game some realistic

034



CONFES ... tale that
... ss. Sonic ...
... ose ... h!

MACHINESHIN
The black ... calls the
speedy ...



BREAKDANCE FIGHTING Sonic's got some new moves to spice up combat.

COMES IN A DISCREET BROWN WRAPPER.
[JUST LIKE MOST OF YOUR OTHER "SPECIAL" PURCHASES]



GRANDMA'S BOY

a HAPPY MADISON production

UNRATED



CAUTION

THIS FILM CONTAINS IMAGES AND THEMES SUCH AS PRIMATES SIPPING HERB, SCANTILY CLAD WOMEN, SCANTILY CLAD GERIATRICS, METAL LEGS, SWEET CAR BEDS, AND A LOT OF DORKS PLAYING VIDEO GAMES. IF ANY OF THESE THINGS "SPARK" YOUR INTEREST, WE SHOULD DEFINITELY HANG OUT THIS WEEKEND. ENJOY THE MOVIE.



RATED AND UNRATED VERSIONS -
DVD Includes Commentary, Deleted Scenes,
Featurettes, Music Video & More!

AVAILABLE ON DVD & UMD
MAY 9th



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touches with both the environmental destruction and the rag-doll enemies. This doesn't mean the game itself is any more realistic — it's still about a blue hedgehog that runs really fast, after all — but it does give the game a sense of

realism that has been missing in prior adventures.

The realism extends to the environments, too, whether there are verdant fields or ancient stone ruins or decimated cities filled with buildings that are ripe for running on. Not only that, but the game features a changing time of day. Whether or not this is merely aesthetic or actually affects gameplay is still unknown, but the fact remains that the lighting is impressive as the sun rises and sets, just like in real life.

Sonic's Back... Right?

We can't promise that *Sonic the Hedgehog* will revive the franchise, but we can say that it's on the right track. This is a game all about Sonic and running and jumping and fighting, which is exactly what a *Sonic* game should be, with the added bonus of looking better and being faster than ever before. This is Sonic's first adventure in the next generation, and we welcome him with open arms, like a long-lost friend. **JUSTIN CHENG**

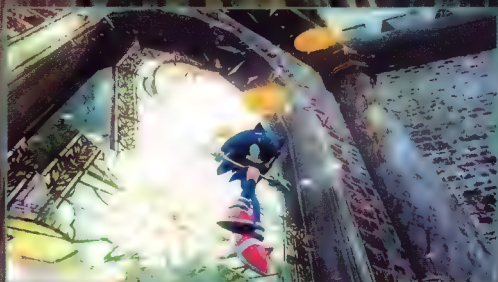


MORE SONIC TALES

Want more Sonic? Go to your local comic book shop and check out *Sonic the Hedgehog* by Archie Comics. It's a long-running series which started in 1993 and is still going today. In addition to the many spin offs, there's a comic series called *Sonic X*, which is based on the animated series of the same name. In fact, if you're not into the whole "reading" thing, you might want to check out *Sonic X* on DVD (though we can't vouch for its quality).

WALL RUNNING

See, this makes sense because Sonic runs really fast.



LORD OF THE RINGS Away, Sonic's wild and rings.



AS MIGHT AS WELL JUMP Hedgehogs and fire don't mix.



THE ULTIMATE DETAILING TOOLS FOR A SHINE THAT ATTRACTS.



LIQUID WAX



ABSORBING CLOTH



SPOKE BRUSH



INTERIOR TOOLS



PS2: Destroy All Humans! 2

GTA GETS 'ANAL PROBED' AGAIN



For as long as videogames have been around, players have had an overwhelming love for "save the day" stories. Well, you can have your *Space Invaders* and *Area 51*; some of us would rather terrorize the planet than save it.

i info

AVAILABLE
Between October and December
TYPE
Action-Adventure
MULTIPLAYER
No
ONLINE
No
ESRB RATING
Rating Pending
PUBLISHED BY
Tig
MADE BY
Pandemic Australia

If you're twisted like we are, you'll definitely want to keep an eye on *Destroy All Humans! 2*. As in the first game, you control a murderous alien on a mission of interplanetary domination with the same simple premise: "them good, you bad, them die." The game's style echoes the absurdity of '50s-era, B-grade sci-fi cheese – and, perhaps more to the point, Tim Burton's 1996 film, *Mars Attacks*. It's all here: the flying saucers, the shadowy government conspiracies, the weird experiments, and the super alien laser death rays (cue the pew-pew-pew sounds). It's sorta like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* meets *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* and *South Park*, with an X button.

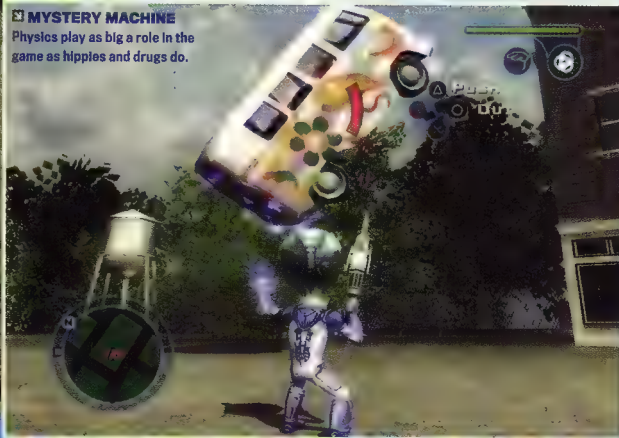
DAH2 feels much like the original, but bigger, stronger, and faster. The world is now fully "open" in the *Grand Theft Auto* sense of the word, meaning that the game's structure is far less linear. As the game's Director of Production, Greg Borrud, puts it: "In the last game we left breadcrumb trails to lead the player; in this one, the player has to probe his environment and decide what to do next." The open mission structure lets you set your own plan of attack, on your own time.

Gameplay is more of the same, as you shoot, talk, and intimidate your way to Earthly domination. Weapons, however, have been given a significant boost. The most impressive one we were



■ MYSTERY MACHINE

Physics play as big a role in the game as hippies and drugs do.



BUILD A BETTER BRAIN

One of the new additions to *DAH2* is what the developer is calling a "gene blender." Essentially, the idea is that you collect the genes of various types of humans, and splice them together to upgrade your alien's mental abilities. Add one part Russian KGB agent, one part Japanese policeman, and two parts dirty American hippie, and who knows what it'll do to your brain chemistry...

shown was a *Half Life 2*-style gravity gun, which allows you to pick up cars, people, or objects and toss them around like toys. There's also a *Men in Black*-style "Mind Flash" which stupefies all pitiable humans in its vicinity, as well as meteor and saucer attacks – and, of course, the anal probe, which sucks human brains out from their second holiest of holies. Don't expect easy targets, though – your enemies are smarter this time. They will dive out of the way and hide from your attacks and, generally speaking, behave more realistically. The developer claims that every weapon in the game can be upgraded five times, which should make for sufficiently varied planet-wrecking.

The first *DAH!* found success thanks to a deep understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the genre it so lovingly lampoons – and from what we've seen, the sequel keeps apace. Where the original toyed with themes like McCarthyism and repressed sexuality, *DAH2* is set in the swinging '60s, when free love and



JAZZ HANDS
One-button body snatching is the way of the future... in the '60s.

counterculture ruled the day. The initial level we saw took place in Bay City (the game's interpretation of San Francisco), where you're looking for a Timothy Leary-inspired character named Coyote Bongwater, who's turning humans into zombies with his patented

Revelade "herbal energy drink." The game goes international this time around – taking players to London, Tokyo,

and Russia – with constant references and fart humor that conjures genuine chuckles.

DAH!'s conversation system will return, as well. Borud notes that BioWare – with whom developer Pandemic recently joined forces in a corporate merger – has really helped in their understanding of how to pace and structure these dialogue trees. "Those who want to can get the added value of humor and backstory," says Borud, "and the action gamers can just skip straight to the important, relevant information and get back to shooting as quickly as possible." Sounds good to us, EVAN SHAMOUN



BFG We've seen this guy panhandle money in the lower Haight a few times.

PS2: LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy

THE STAR WARS GAME WE'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR



Will *Star Wars* ever die? Not likely, considering the last 30 or so years has shown nothing but growth of interest in the legendary series. Even with the completion of

the movies, the war that keeps on giving is still going strong in other entertainment mediums, particularly videogames.

That brings us to *LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy*, the sequel to last year's biggest

sleepers hit. Selling over three million copies worldwide, the married mix of LEGOs with *Star Wars* successfully appealed to just about every market: children and teens who've newly discovered the franchises through the recent movies and toys; young adults who've obsessed over *Star Wars*' savior story and LEGO's pop culture value; parents who grew up watching the original trilogy of movies, and played with the building blocks introduced over 50 years ago. The concept alone markets itself.

This sequel follows the path set by its predecessor in almost every way, offering the ability



▶ **LET THE WOOKIEE WIN** Chewbacca just loves to hear the popping sound.

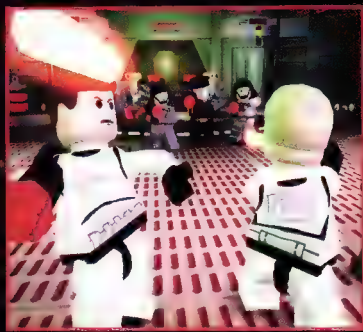
i info

AVAILABLE
Fall
TYPE
Action-Adventure
MULTIPLAYER
Two-player co-op
ONLINE
No
ESRB RATING
Rating Pending
PUBLISHED BY
LucasArts
MADE BY
Traveller's Tales





❖ **HIGH LOW-TECH** The characters may be simple blocks, but note the slick lighting and reflections that make them look like true Jedi batters.



❖ **PEW PEW** Each character has a unique dodge animation.

to play as tens of characters in full co-op play. Also addressed is the most critical complaint of the last game: the difficulty, or lack thereof. With artificial intelligence that now adjusts on the fly (this feature can also be disabled), the game shoots to be more gratifying for all that play, regardless of age or skill. You'll also be able to use a save file from the first game to instantly unlock every prequel character in the original trilogy.

Other new game highlights are the inclusion of playable vehicles and creatures in levels, the ability for non-Force-wielding characters to build objects, tons of new character-specific animations, and a new character creation system. This create-a-character mode allows you to mix and match a huge assortment of heads, bodies, hands and more to create an abomination of a character for use in the free play mode. Just imagine a bikini-clad Leia body, a Darth Vader head, Boba Fett's hands and Storm Trooper legs all fused together, bringing to

life your twisted Frankenstein fantasies of yore. It may look sick and silly, but hey, at least it's true to the LEGO spirit of creative building. **KAISER HWANG**



❖ **LOVAGE** What happens on the Death Star, stays on the Death Star.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

The word "LEGO" has become an adjective of its own, typically describing any set of interlocking bricks. It was originally coined in 1949 after the Danish phrase, *leg godt*, which means "play well." Now LEGOs are saving the galaxy.

NICE RIDES

Along with vehicle-specific levels, you can now board some rides (like this AT-ST) during "on-foot" levels, too.





PS2: **Naruto: Ultimate Ninja** **EVER PLAYED A COMIC?**

1 info
AVAILABLE
Summer
TYPE
Fighting
MULTIPLAYER
Two-player versus
ONLINE
No
ESRB RATING
Rating Pending
PUBLISHED BY
NAMCO BANDAI
MADE BY
CyberConnect 2

The last *Dragon Ball Z* game gave us a good glimpse of how a preposterous anime could be presented in a faithful and exciting way, using a clever mélange of cel-shaded visuals and outrageous special moves. *Naruto: Ultimate Ninja* goes two steps farther, utilizing the same techniques and then turning the volume up to 13. Like its *Shonen Jump* sibling, *Naruto* is all about handing down the beat-down. More akin to the Nintendo classic *Super Smash*



DREAM BATTLES Now fans of the super-popular manga and anime can create their own custom match-ups, such as *Naruto* against his teacher Kakashi.



THWAK Everything is made to look like the manga/anime.

Bros., the fighting is simplistic, yet flexible enough that it allows for just the right amount of moves. You're also able to move in and out of the foreground and background planes for both offensive and defensive purposes.

While nothing here is exactly new, *Ultimate Ninja* brings the manga/animated series to life with truly stunning visuals and an overall presentation that is second to none. From the whacked out, multi-tiered super moves to the comic-panel story presentation, trust us when we say this is as close to a playable anime as we've ever seen in a videogame.

The game also includes a countless number of bonus features, from viewable 3D character models to addicting little mini-games. We were almost overwhelmed at how much there was to unlock. It's safe to say that *Ultimate Ninja* will be as effective a game as it is a compendium for the *Naruto* universe.

With the PS2 slowly approaching its last lap around the current-gen track, we have to admit we're glad to see a game that tries to find the right balance of art and game design to create an experience as compelling to strangers as it is to its fans. We'll find out this summer if it all pays off. **KAISER HWANG**

SWIRLY WHIRLY

"Naruto" is a Japanese nickname for the "a" symbol, which translates roughly into maelstrom, a whirl pool of sorts. Notice the similarity of the "a" symbol to the one on Naruto's headband, and also how it looks like well-a whirlpool.



PROJECT THIS Every character has a projectile for long-range attacks.



NINJA STYLE

SAMURAI STYLE

SAMURAI WARRIORS



What's your style? Try them all with 19 warriors dressed to kill, enhanced strategy,
all-new scenarios, and multiplayer challenges for up to 4 players.

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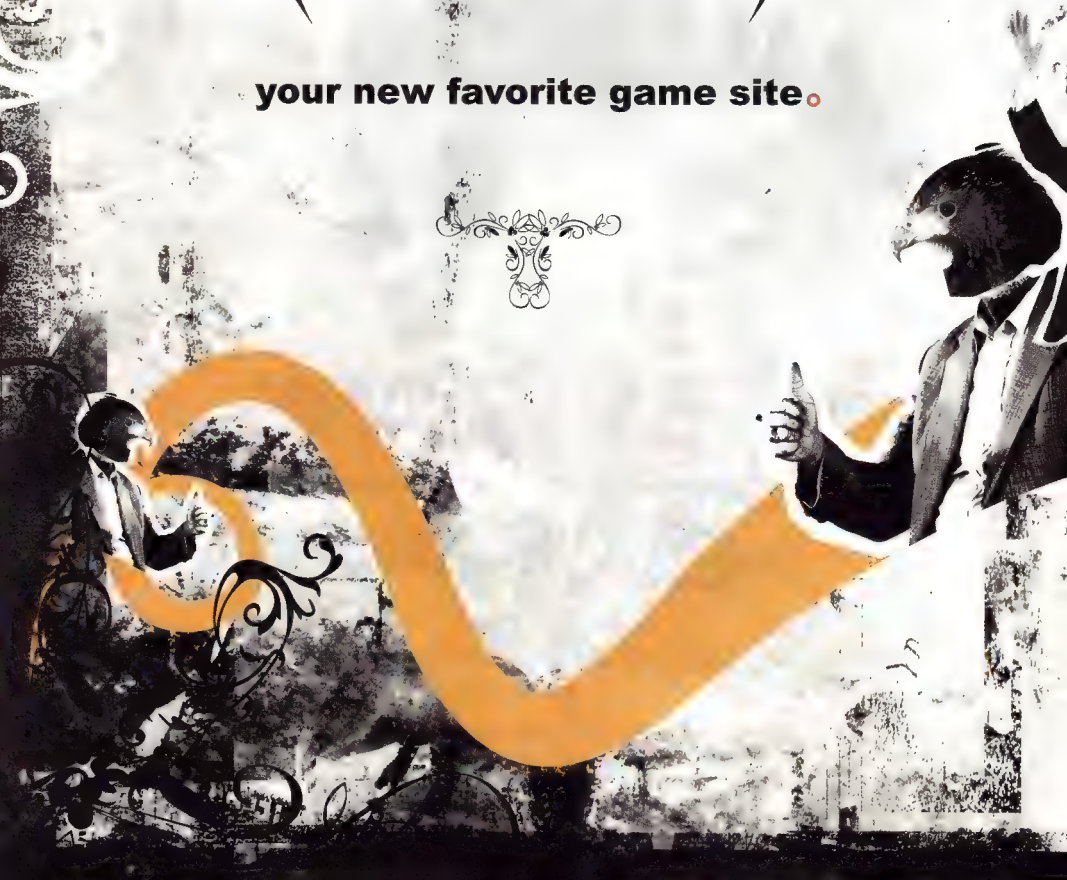
Violence

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[illegible]**PC GAMER**

PS2: Xenosaga III: Also sprach Zarathustra

Most games don't make themselves very noticeable every now and then a title will come along that will make you question your very existence. The *Xenosaga* series has always challenged the player with complex storylines heavily rooted in philosophy, and this third and final chapter in the series will work your brain like no other. With a reported eight hours of cutscenes, there should be more than enough time to fill in all the blanks left empty by the previous titles. With the inclusion of a mini-game map editor, it looks like you'll be able to actually play the game as much as you watch it. KAISER HWANG

■ **REAL DOLL** Admit it, you want one.



■ **MY TURN** Turn-based battles wouldn't work in real life.

■ **I WANT MY XTV**

There's over eight hours of cinematics to watch, so make sure you go to the restroom before playing.



i info
AVAILABLE
Fall
PUBLISHED BY
NAMCO BANDAI
MADE BY
Monolithsoft



IN ENGLISH, PLEASE

Each of the three *Xenosaga* games has used a Friedrich Nietzsche book name as a subtitle. The first was *The Will to Power*, the second *Beyond Good & Evil*, and now, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.



PS2: Gallop Racer 2006

AVAILABLE	May
PUBLISHED BY	Tecmo
MADE BY	Tecmo

In any real sport, nothing is as easy as it looks: football is not simply about catching a ball and running; baseball is not just about hitting a ball with a bat; and horse racing is far more complex than hitchin' a ride across a finish line. If any game nails the sophisticated nature of the sport, it's this series. Loaded with stats and micro management, the sim-like gameplay definitely has a steep learning curve – though we're inclined to say that any horse lover wouldn't have it any other way. KAISER HWANG



PS2: Yakuza

AVAILABLE	September
PUBLISHED BY	Sega
MADE BY	Smilebit

Like a Japanese version of GTA, *Yakuza* presents an authentic gang narrative through the use of an open world and action-packed sequences derived straight from any number of Japanese films. Our U.S. version of the game will include only an English language track, much to our disappointment, as there simply isn't enough room on a DVD to hold both the English and Japanese audio. Since so much is riding on this huge title, we hope that Sega hires the right people for the job. KAISER HWANG



BANDAI MONKEY BALLS

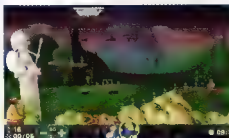
Yakuza is an extremely violent and serious game. It's ironic that the creator behind the title is also the mastermind that...



PS2: Mortal Kombat: Armageddon

AVAILABLE	November
PUBLISHED BY	Midway
MADE BY	Midway

If anything, this game is a celebration of the series and should be called *"Mortal Kombat: Fan Service."* Why? Because fan service is exactly what this game is all about, with its expansive roster of all the characters from the MK universe, its improved Konquest mode, and its brand new customization options which allow you to create your own characters and customize your own Fatalities. It's enough to make us yell, "Mortal Kombaaat!" For realz. JUSTIN CHENG



PSP: Lemmings

AVAILABLE	May
PUBLISHED BY	Sony
MADE BY	Team 17

To quote Spock from *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, "Logic clearly dictates that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." *Lemmings* exemplifies this perfectly: you assign your none-too-intelligent lemmings various skills and navigate them through dangerous environments, sacrificing some so that the rest can reach safety. This PSP version features spiffy new graphics, a bevy of both new and old levels, and the ability to make your own levels and share them with others. **JUSTIN CHENG**



PSP: Capcom Puzzle World

AVAILABLE	Between April and June
PUBLISHED BY	Capcom
MADE BY	Capcom

Capcom blesses the PSP once again with another collection of classics from its back catalog of nostalgic arcade hits. This time we get *Buster Bros. Collection*, *Block Block*, and the now-legendary *Super Puzzle Fighter II*. There are a couple of unique features included in the collection, such as a screen capture mode and the ability to import photos as backgrounds in *Buster Bros. Collection*. Wireless multiplayer and 16x9 optimization are included, too. **KAISER HWANG**



info

PSP: LocoRoco

AVAILABLE	TBA 2006
PUBLISHED BY	Sony
MADE BY	Sony



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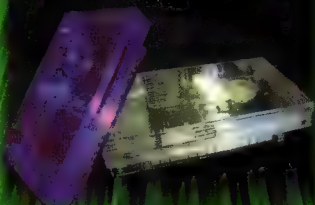


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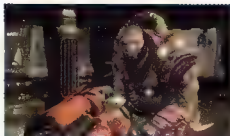
Supposedly, Chow Yun-Fat and an as of yet unnamed American actor will star in a remake of *Hard Boiled*. Woo was offered the directing duties, but he declined, so Chow suggested Johnnie To.

**3. MAKE
A MESS**
Everything in
this game can be
knocked over,
blown up, or
splintered apart.

AVAILABLE
Winter
PUBLISHER
Midway
MADE BY
Midway Chicago

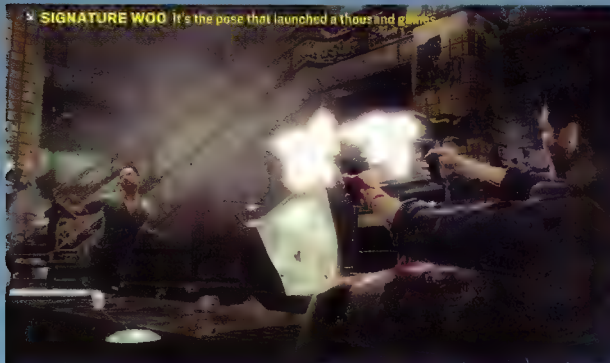
Yun-Fat returns as duo

wielding supercop Tequila on a mission to look cool and shoot up everything, alive or inanimate. He'll do it, too, thanks to the *Time* and *Rolling Stone* covers, and the *Time* magazine cover featuring a picture of him and his band. And, of course, the *Time* magazine cover featuring a picture of him and his band.



AVAILABLE	Fall
PUBLISHED BY	Midway
MADE BY	Epic Games

A showcase at Sony's E3 press conference last year, *Unreal Tournament 2007* is a continuation of the excellent PC first-person shooter series, with more modes, new vehicles, and most obviously, eye-burning, next-gen visuals. We saw the game not too long ago, and it's no stretch of the imagination to say that these screens are a perfect indication of the graphical quality we can expect to see in many new PS3 games, as many are utilizing the same, much-lauded Unreal Engine 3 technology. The big question now is, will this game make the PlayStation 3's November launch? **KAISER HWANG**



The List OF UPCOMING GAMES

PS2 GAMES

GAME	COMES OUT
July 2006	
NCAA Football 07	07/03/2006
August 2006	
Bully	08/01/2006
Dance Factory	08/01/2006
Final Fantasy VII: Dirge of Cerberus	08/01/2006
Madden NFL 07	08/01/2006
Disgaea 2	08/29/2006
September 2006	
Rainbow Six: Vegas	09/01/2006
Splinter Cell: Double Agent	09/01/2006
Test Drive Unlimited	09/05/2006
Yakuza	09/05/2006
Dot.Hack G.U.	09/06/2006
LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy	09/12/2006
Okami	09/12/2006
Scarface	09/26/2006



THE
EMPIRE
STRIKES
BACK
LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy
LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy
LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy

PSP GAMES

GAME	COMES OUT
July 2006	
The Godfather	07/03/2006
Blade Dancer	07/18/2006
Miami Vice	07/18/2006
August 2006	
Madden NFL 07	08/01/2006
Tenchu: Time of the Assassins	08/08/2006
Bounty Hounds	08/15/2006
Fast & the Furious	08/15/2006
Tekken Dark Resurrection	08/15/2006
50 Cent: Bulletproof	08/29/2006
September 2006	
Rainbow Six: Vegas	09/01/2006
Test Drive Unlimited	09/05/2006
LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy	09/05/2006

The Most Wanted

WANTED GAME	SYS	COMES OUT
Splinter Cell: Double Agent	PS2	09/01/2006
Okami	PS2	09/12/2006
Final Fantasy XII	PS2	10/03/2006
Guitar Hero 2	PS2	TBA 2006
God of War II	PS2	Spring 2007
Assassins	PS3	TBA 2007
Lair	PS3	TBA 2007
Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots	PS3	TBA 2007
Resident Evil 5	PS3	TBA 2007
Devil May Cry 4	PS3	TBA 2007
Killzone	PS3	TBA 2007
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	PS3	TBA 2007

Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway

WHAT IS IT?

A tactical squad-based shooter based on real WWII people, events, and locations.

WHY WE WANT IT:

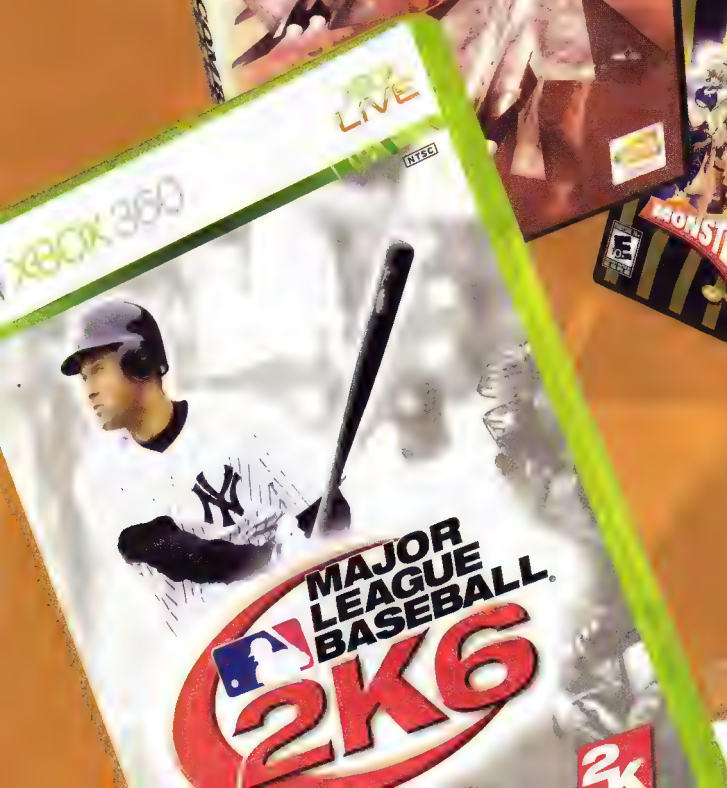
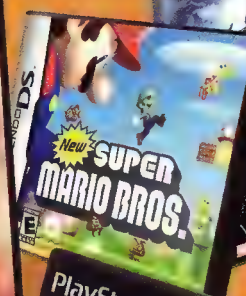
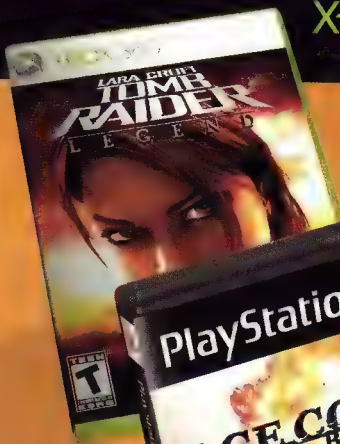
Besides being the best WWII shooter series ever, the PS3 version has graphics like we've never seen before, gameplay to match, and enough emotion that it may actually make us cry.



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ESRB

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news

BIG PS3 NEWS AT A GLANCE

Worldwide launch in the first half of November; expect shortages

No official price; likely to be \$399

Comes standard with a 60GB Hard Drive

The launch games and final controller will be unveiled at E3

All games will come on Blu-ray Discs

Games won't have to contain regional lockouts

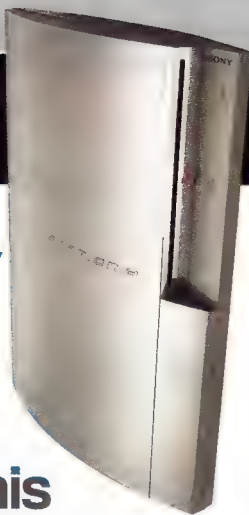
PSone and PS2 games will play in 720p, 1080i, and 1080p

Xbox Live-type service to launch with the PS3, with no charge for playing games online

PS3 READY FOR WAR

Naysayers beware; this "sleeping giant" is wide awake

After a year without a PS3 peep out of Sony, recent weeks have seen the console leader back on the offensive with a sudden bombardment of major announcements. While analysts have been questioning Sony's abilities, Microsoft has been taking constant potshots, and gamers have been eagerly gobbling up Xbox 360s, Sony has kept calm, cool, and (often frustratingly) quiet... but if anyone thinks for a second that this company isn't ready to defend its top spot, they're in for a rude awakening. PS3 may have been missing in action, but it's about to go Chuck Norris all over the competition.



Playing Hard To Get In Early November

Finally admitting what we've reported for months, Sony has announced that the PS3 has been pushed back from its Spring launch; a simultaneous worldwide release will occur in the first half of November. According to Sony, the price of the system "will not retail for under" about \$425 in Japanese yen. Since game consoles are typically a little cheaper here in the U.S. than in Japan, it's reasonable for us to expect to see a price tag of \$399.

If you thought "uh-oh" when you read "worldwide launch," then you already know what's coming: shortages. With only about a million units projected for the U.S. on Day One, and the initial demand for PS3 expected to be much higher than it was for either PS2 or Xbox 360, you'd better put that preorder in now. Sony will

add around a half-million more units before the end of the year, but that's still going to leave a lot of people disappointed over the Holidays. If you see eBay hoarders standing next to you in line, smack 'em.

The PS3 Difference

Back to the good news. Every PS3 will come standard with an upgradable 60GB hard drive, and every PS3 game will come on a Blu-ray Disc (it was previously thought that many early titles might use DVD). At March's Game Developer's Conference, Sony stressed the advantages that Blu-ray's superior 50GB storage capacity will offer. To illustrate their point, a much-improved version of a PS3 demo from last year's E3 expo was shown, in which the development team behind *The Getaway* meticulously rendered London's Piccadilly

Square with an astounding level of detail in the buildings, street traffic, and pedestrians that, according to Sony, is only possible with a Blu-ray Disc.

The extra storage space will also sometimes be used to fit every country's version of a game onto a single disc. Furthermore, Sony will not impose a regional lockout in the games, although publishers will have the option to do so if they wish. Just think, if a hot title hits Japan first, not only could you import it and play it on your U.S. PS3, but the full English game could very well be on the Japanese disc!

Of course, as previously announced, the PS3 will also play nearly every PS one and PS2 title, and will even run those games in 720p, 1080i, or 1080p. Not that high-def will always help jaggy, old PS one graphics, but it's a sweet option to have.

XBOX Sony Live

It was a pretty amazing feat that, at GDC, Sony managed to announce every one of Xbox Live's online features for PS3 without once referencing the competition by name. The "PlayStation Network Platform" (don't worry, it's not the final title) will be a single, unified online service, tying every PS3



WILL THE BOOM-ERANG COME BACK?

E3 will be judgement day for the PS3's much-maligned "boomerang" controller. According to the President of Sony's Worldwide Studios, the final controller "will be unveiled" at the show, leading us to believe that it's something we haven't seen before.



LEST WE FORGET PS2 Shortages forced players to camp out at launch.

I HAVE NO CONCERNS ABOUT THE COMPETITION



Phil Harrison
President of Sony's
Worldwide Studios

GAME game together with friend lists, messaging, video chat, and much more. It will go "live" (zing!) the day PS3s hit the streets, with PSP support to come later on.

So, Sony's finally fessed up that Microsoft kinda, sorta got things right with Xbox Live. Here's how Sony gets its sweet revenge: playing multiplayer games online is free. In the aftermath of Sony dropping this mega-bomb, it'll be interesting to see if Microsoft will continue to charge \$50 annually to play 360 games online. Of course, this isn't Fantasy Land; Sony *does* aim to use its network to rake in big bucks through game content downloads, like new levels and such. In rare cases, publishers can choose to charge their own per-game subscription fees (think *Final Fantasy XI*). While full game downloads will be limited to smaller, simpler titles at first, expect publishers to try full PS3 games at some point. Phil Harrison, President of Sony's Worldwide Studios, sees the gradual move to e-distribution as "the most influential shift the industry has ever seen."

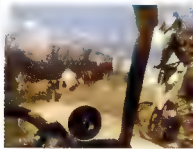
Next Stop, E3

The war gets bloody at May's E3 games expo, where the PS3 floodgates will officially open. Sony is sure to make some surprise announcements, we'll go hands-on with the PS3 launch titles, and the PS3 controller will be re-unveiled (rumors persist that the boomerang pad has been tossed and ain't coming back). Across the hall, Microsoft and Nintendo will retaliate with everything they've got, and the next-gen console war will be on.

No company has ever dominated videogaming for three straight generations. Unfortunately for Microsoft and Nintendo, though, Sony isn't showing any signs of fading away. With PS3's plans finally coming together, this continues to be Sony's war to lose. **CHRIS SLATE**

Eyes-On With PS3 Launch Games

At March's Game Developer's Conference, we got eyefuls of three games rumored to launch with the PS3 – well, we saw parts of them, anyway. Sony limited the demonstrations, stripping the games down to illustrate just a few technological points to the would-be PS3 game makers in attendance. If you ask us, though, it was a limp way to show such key titles for the first time. However, we fully expect the "official" unveilings at E3 to blow us away, so keep that in mind as you read our following impressions. (The screens shown are from last year's E3 expo.)



MOTOR STORM

This demonstration was a pale comparison to the "holy s---t" trailer shown at last year's E3. An "eh"-looking buggy jittered around with a choppy framerate, making kinda-cool tracks in the mud. Nothing looked especially impressive; the flying mud didn't appear remarkably better than similar effects on PS2. It was obvious that this demo only represented a tiny part of a much larger game.



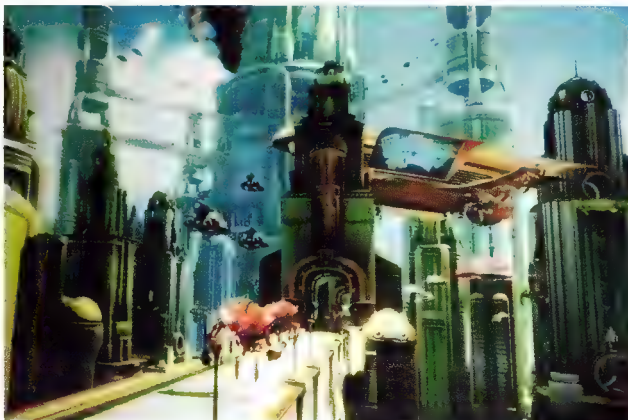
RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

Previously code-named *I8*, *Resistance* featured impressive weapons that showed the playfulness that Insomniac built its gun-heavy *Ratchet & Clank* series around. By locking onto an enemy, you could hone in on him with shots that bent around corners. Another cannon launched a giant, spiked ball that would explode, perforating enemies with dozens of long, razor-sharp quills.



WARHAWK

While not a home run, this demo looked fun enough, with swarms of fighters crisscrossing through tracer fire and zig-zagging around massive "Capitol Ships." The PS3's big brain was used to create "ambient warfare," giving the game a realistic sense of being in the middle of a battle zone. The lighting was nice and dramatic, with the setting sun reflected on the simulated ocean and clouds.



WOWIE-WOW-WOW Insomniac had a second demo teasing the next *Ratchet & Clank*. A hyper-detailed cityscape was shown – think the first level of the original *R&C*, only powered up to the degree seen in the film *The Fifth Element* – complete with numerous layers of jam-packed sky traffic.

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INNOVATIVE SERIES INNOVATES BY ENDING

Fan-favorite Katamari Damacy is going out on top

Hot on the heels of the award-winning *Katamari Damacy*, the fan-demanded sequel *We ♥ Katamari*, and PSP's recent *Me and My Katamari*, Namco has dropped a bombshell about the revolutionary series' next sequel: there won't be one.

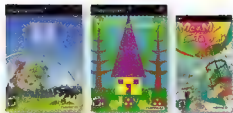
Yep, while most publishers only stop regurgitating a game once sales (and consumer apathy) hit rock-bottom, *Katamari Damacy* is bucking trends yet again by going out on top. At least, it certainly appears that way – the series' official website has closed down and left this quirky, *Katamari*-style message in its place:

"As of today, March 17, *Katamari Damacy On the Web* is shutting down. For this kind of page, and this type of game, we really think we did well

lasting a full two years. To the development staff and everyone who played *Katamari Damacy*, you have our deepest thanks. Now, each member of the *Katamari* team has split, and is pursuing their own ideas. The creator of the *Katamari* series is also working on a new game. It will not be about rolling, or growing bigger, but still might turn out to be interesting. So please don't get your hopes up, but just wait and see. And so, until the day we meet again, farewell."

This news shouldn't come as a shock to those who have followed *Katamari* creator Keita Takahashi, who has become something of a cult hero to gamers tired of the same-old, same-old. It's well known that he originally wanted to stop at the first game, but continued for the fans who had shown the series such strong love and support.

If this really is the end, we applaud Takahashi and Namco for turning away easy sequel money and instead remaining true to *Katamari*'s spirit of innovation. Takahashi's next game, although "it will not be about rolling," just made the top of our most-wanted list. CHRIS SLATE



TRILOGY COMPLETE The three *Katamari* titles are now officially must-have collector's items.



RUBIN'S MESSAGE:

After 20 years at Naughty Dog I've decided to try something new. *Iron and the Maiden* will be my first solo project. It isn't *Crash Bandicoot*, and it isn't *Jak and Daxter*. This is something new. Raw, uncensored, uncult. It's been in the back of my head for years looking to get out, and I've assembled an incredible team to bring it to fruition. Stay tuned...

WHAT'S JAK & DAXTER'S DADDY UP TO?

Jason Rubin not only created the hit series *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jak & Daxter*, but also the company that developed them, Naughty Dog. After *Jak 3*, however, Rubin walked away from both his company and gaming altogether. In March, he resurfaced... on MySpace, of all places. He announced his new project *Iron and the Maiden* with a logo and the silhouette of a character apparently named "Michael Iron," according to the copyright text at the bottom of the page. [Check out Rubin's announcement to the left.]

Just to clear things up for you metalheads out there, Jason went on to say, "I want to make one thing clear: this has *nothing* to do with the band Iron Maiden. 'Up the Irons,' but do it on your own time!" Surely Rubin, a longtime friend of PSM, would give us all the juicy details. When contacted, though, he only added this little morsel: "I would like to point one thing out... I have not said that it is a game."

Either he's torturing us just to watch us squirm, or *Iron and the Maiden* really is something else. A CG movie, maybe? Whatever it is, considering Rubin's pedigree, gamers will want to take notice. Jason has promised that we'll know more soon. In the meantime, check out the original page at www.myspace.com/ironandthemaiden. CHRIS SLATE

WHAT A TEASE So far, this logo and silhouette are the only proof that the project exists.



Does Hollywood Hate Us?

WHY GAME MOVIES ARE ALMOST INTENTIONALLY BAD

Videogame movies suck. Gamers know it, movie critics know it, and by now, certainly those Hollywood bigwigs know it... right? Well then, how do we explain recent dreck like *BloodRayne*? And have you caught a whiff of that trailer for *Dead or Alive*? It's tempting to think that movie makers simply want to torture us, but here's what we think the problems really are:

PROBLEM 1: No respect

Because movie studios don't really "get" games, they don't treat them seriously. Game movies don't attract great talent or big budgets. They're seen purely as a quick way to make a buck off of gaming's much-publicized billion-dollar fan base.

PROBLEM 2: There hasn't been a big hit

We need that one genuinely great, successful game movie to show everyone else how to do things right. Comic book films are a good

comparison: they suffered through years of lameness before finally getting good. Could *Halo* be our turning point?

PROBLEM 3: Game stories are weak

Well, for the most part, they are. Let's be honest, it's a rare game that offers more than a simple, you've-seen-it-a-million-times-before plotline with shallow, generic characters. It's not a big problem when the focus is on gameplay, but take away the controller and there usually isn't much left to work with.

PROBLEM 4: Uwe Boll

While the infamous director can't shoulder *all* of the blame for Hollywood's failures, you can't talk about bad game movies without mentioning him. After filming atrocities like *House of the Dead*, *Alone in the Dark*, and *BloodRayne*, Boll has become living proof that not only do movie studios not "get" gaming, but they also don't care enough to figure it out. Next up for Boll: *Hunter: The Reckoning*, *Far Cry*, *Postal*, and *Fear Effect*. At least, if he's going to make B-movies, he's sticking to B-games. CHRIS SLATE



CREAM OF THE CRAP

	Alone in the Dark (2005)	BloodRayne (2006)	Doom (2005)	Double Dragon (1994)	House of the Dead (2003)	Mortal Kombat: Annihilation (1997)	Resident Evil: Apocalypse (2004)	Street Fighter (1994)	Super Mario Bros. (1993)	Wing Commander (1989)
MOVIE										
TALENT	"Evil Awakens"	"Driven by revenge..."	"Hell breaks loose"	"Evil has just met its match"	"The dead walk... you run"	"Destroy all expectations"	"The evil continues"	"The fight to save the world is on!"	"This ain't no game, it's a live-action thrill ride!"	"At the edge of the universe, all hell is about to break loose"
NEEDED THE MONEY?										
THE CRITICS SAID	"Alone in the Dark is no better than whatever you might pick up while wearing a blindfold at Blockbuster, even if you happen to reach into a trash can." —Jack Matthews, New York Daily News	"Flo to any random sequence in BloodRayne and you'll see a film professor's most vibrant nightmare." —Scott Weinberg, FilmCritic.com	"Those who step up to the box office window and request Doom will get what they asked for." —Phil Villarreal, Arizona Daily Star	"How hard would it be to come up with a story at least as good as that of the original Nintendo game? Impossible." —Luke Y. Thompson, New Times	"If you want to see what a cinematic piece of dog barf looks like, go see House of the Dead." —Jovanka Vuckovic, Rue Morgue Magazine	"You know that when an acting joke like Christopher Lambert won't even return for the sequel, some fragile line has been crossed." —Marjorie Baumgarten, Austin Chronicle	"If creative bankruptcy was legally actionable, this film would be in Chapter 11." —Colin Covert, Minneapolis Star Tribune	"Bizarro, surreal, and ultimately less engaging than playing Pong with a blind man" —Marc Slavov, Austin Chronicle	"Super Mario Bros. is about as playful and challenging as an unplugged pinball machine." —Frank Ochberg, Movie Eye	"Wing Commander falls far short of its legacy and gets sucked into a gravitational cesspool of sci-fi clichés." —Hilme Chensanthal, The Village Voice
MEMORABLE DIALOGUE	Edward Caraby: "Your mother's wrong, kid. Being afraid of the dark is what keeps most of us alive."	Darius the Kid: "Can I see your t---ies?"	Corporal Dean Portman: "I gotta take a dump."	Guisman: "Huwy, Lewis, any news?"	Rudy: "You did all this to become immortal. Why? Castillo: "To live forever!"	Nightwolf: "Feel your Animality!"	L.J.: "You mother---ers is crazy! Look---er that big mother---er got a rocket launcher!"	Bison: "For you, the day Bison graced your village was the most important day of your life. But for me... it was Tuesday."	Princess Daisy: "I'm a vegetarian. I don't eat anything with a face."	Forbes: "I've balls) are bigger." Maniac: "I've been told size doesn't matter." Forbes: "She lied."
REDUING QUALITY	It's the (unintentional) comedy of the years	It kept game-slandering director Uwe Boll away from other games that we like better.	Includes a first-person action scene that makes you want to stop other watching and put the game in.	Features a character named "Abobo," which is just about the best name ever.	Smallville's Lois Lane in the buff.	The "Animality" fight scene is absolutely hilarious.	Topless zombie hookers.	Featured the late acting legend Raul Julia (Bison) in his final role.	Loads of insider game references remind you that it's only the movie that stinks.	Seeing this in the theater got you a first-look at Star Wars Episode 1.

GOODBYE, PS ONE

After 11 years and 100 million sold, Sony stops production



PS ONE: A LIFE

U.S. Release:
September 9th, 1995

Over 100 million sold worldwide

INNOVATIONS

First 3D-focused game console

First major game console to play CDs

First Dual Shock feedback

First Dual Analog control

First with four shoulder buttons

First Memory Cards

In the grand history of home gaming, three consoles have mattered the most: the Atari 2600, the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), and Sony's first PlayStation. They all have three things in common: they forever changed the direction of gaming; they each became synonyms for "videogame"; and finally, they all officially are a part of gaming's past. Yep, the PS one has, at long last, been put to rest.

As some of you know, Sony hadn't originally intended to release its own game console. Ironically, the company had teamed with Nintendo to develop an add-on CD-ROM drive for the Super NES. However, in what is easily one of gaming's biggest

mistakes, Nintendo pushed Sony to the curb and partnered with Phillips instead. Sony then used the CD-ROM drive as the starting point for its own system. We focus on leaving 2D gaming behind in favor of 3D polygonal graphics. Nintendo, whose NES had stubbornly stuck with the less-capable cartridge format, quickly caught the back of Sony's pimp hand. Thus, the PlayStation era was born.

PSM salutes the console that took videogames to an older, wider audience, and gave us gaming milestones like *Resident Evil*, *Metal Gear Solid*, and *Tomb Raider*. Although you may no longer be with us, your games will live on—in games like *1080i on PSM*, *Sonic*, and *Star Wars*.

OUR ALL-TIME TOP 10 PS ONE GAMES

These games helped define the system, they re-defined gaming, and they are still worth playing, even with janky old graphics.

1. *Metal Gear Solid*
2. *Final Fantasy VII*
3. *Resident Evil 2*
4. *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*
5. *Street Fighter Alpha 3*
6. *R4: Ridge Racer Type 4*
7. *Final Fantasy Tactics*
8. *Gran Turismo 2*
9. *Super Puzzle Fighter II: Turbo*
10. *Tekken 3*

BARRY BURTON: MASTER OF THE OBVIOUS

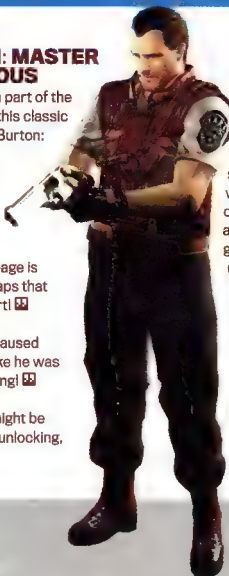
Hilariously bad dialogue is a part of the *Resident Evil* charm. Enjoy this classic cheese, courtesy of Barry Burton:

[Jill, who notices that a page is missing from a file] "I found something... it's a weapon... it's really powerful - especially against living things!"

[To Jill, who notices that a page is missing from a file] "Perhaps that was the most important part!"

[Jill, who notices that a page is missing from a file] "I'm gonna find out what caused Forest's death... it looked like he was killed by a crow, or something!"

[Jill, who notices that a page is missing from a file] "Jill, here's a lockpick. It might be handy if you, the master of unlocking, take it with you."



A Decade Of Evil

HORROR KING RESIDENT EVIL TURNS 10

Can you believe that it's already been a *decade* since we first heard that there was a such thing as a "master of unlocking?" Ten years later and going strong, *Resident Evil*, gaming's reigning king of the undead, is very much alive.

There have been 13 unique *Resident Evil* titles released, not counting the tweaked re-releases of certain games. That's more than a game a year since the series started!

There have been low points... the really lame lightning games, the super-annoying backtracking in *Zero*, the load-

heavy *Outbreak* titles...

Of course, the series has *many* more high points. Our top three: the original *Resident Evil*, for starting the "Survival Horror" genre; *Resident Evil 2*, which is our favorite of the "old-style" *RE* games; and *Resident Evil 4*, for redefining the series and being our overall favorite.

The best may be yet to come, judging by the breathtaking teaser trailer and screens shown of PS3's *Resident Evil 5*. As long as Capcom keeps dishing out the chills and thrills, we'll be first in line. CHRIS SLATE



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GAMES AND CONSOLES

MGS CENTRAL



MAKING METAL GEAR HISTORY



Metal Gear Saga director Ryan Payton on the documentary's origins and what we *didn't* see

info

Ryan Payton

TITLE International Manager, Kojima Productions
WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT WHAT HE SAYS Ryan is fast becoming one of the most dynamic members of the Kojima Productions staff, creating the *Metal Gear Saga* DVD, hosting their official podcast, and now involving himself in the research side of MGS4's development. He's a diehard *Metal Gear* fan who's truly at the heart of everything *Metal Gear*.

There's one thing *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima has become known for besides making great games: doing whatever it takes to please his fans. In the run up to the release of *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*, Kojima took things a step further by doing something unprecedented here in the U.S. — he gave *Metal Gear Saga*, a DVD documentary of the history of the series, away for free to fans who pre-ordered the game. Kojima Productions' Ryan Payton served as writer/director on the 30 minute documentary, and he took a break from his globe-trotting MGS4 "reconnaissance mission" to speak with PSM about it. **RANDY NELSON**

PSM: How did the *Metal Gear Saga* project come about?

Ryan Payton: The project was born out of a simple misunderstanding. When I first joined Kojima Productions last summer, I caught a glance of the studio's Tokyo Game Show lineup, which included something called "*Metal Gear Saga*." I immediately started imagining what *Saga* was. A new game? A comic? A hentai love adventure? A documentary?

It turned out to just be the name of our TGS stage show, but it nonetheless gave me a creative charge. Several weeks later I presented my idea to Mr. Kojima: a DVD documentary that would be offered as a pre-order bonus for

Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence. He gave me the okay and I got to work immediately on the project.

PSM: What kind of research went into it, and how long did it take to create?

Ryan Payton: Researching all the material for *Saga* didn't take long at all. As a hardcore *Metal Gear* fan, I had most of the narration already running in my head. Mr. Kojima asked me to work with Hidekuni Shida, who is Mr. Kojima's favorite game journalist in Japan, to cross-check all of my facts.

From the time I got the go-ahead to make the DVD to the day I hand-carried the digital beta

tape in for DVD duplication was a little over three weeks. Needless to say, I spent many nights sleeping in the office.

PSM: Was there a lot of material left on the cutting room floor?

Ryan Payton: We used 80% of the interview footage of Mr. Kojima. The remaining 20% is talk of characters that don't play a main role in the *Metal Gear* lineage. There is also a funny clip of Mr. Kojima reminiscing about how a top executive told him before the first *Metal Gear Solid*'s release that the game would never sell. He likes that story.

PSM: Were there ever plans to

THE PROJECT WAS BORN OUT OF A SIMPLE MISUNDERSTANDING — Ryan Payton

sell the DVD in stores – or are there plans to for those who didn't pre-order *Subsistence*?
Ryan Payton: The response to *Metal Gear Saga* has been unbelievably positive. Currently we have no plans to sell it at retail, but I don't think that's such a bad idea. From all the reports I've seen, *Saga* "sold out" at virtually every shop it was sent to. I know there are a lot of fans that weren't able to get their hands on a copy.

PSM: While putting *Saga* together, did you ever think, "Hey, this storyline is really out there?"
Ryan Payton: You're right – the plot of *Metal Gear* is definitely out there, but it flows incredibly well for a series that was never really intended to be expanded into six or seven chapters. It's my understanding that Mr. Kojima never intended to make a sequel to the original *Metal Gear* and also didn't create *Metal Gear Solid* with any thought of continuing its story with a sequel. So with that said, I think the team has done an incredible job in keeping the plot and timeline cohesive.

PSM: Can you elaborate more on the original design for *MGS2*, or is it pretty much all on the DVD? [It's revealed that *MGS2* was originally set in Iraq and onboard an aircraft carrier –Randy]
Ryan Payton: I'm interested in this as well. If there is ever a Volume 2 [of *Metal Gear Saga*], I'm going to lock Mr. Kojima in the recording studio and hide the key until he tells me every detail about his original plot for *MGS2*. While I can't make any promises, I'll try my best to track down any early footage of the Iraq setting and early tanker. Maybe Mr. Nijiri could help out with that. [He was one of the main guys behind the *MGS2* tanker stage.]

PSM: It's called *Metal Gear Saga Volume 1* – will we get *Volume 2* after another five *MGS* games?
Ryan Payton: Hopefully *Volume 2* will come out sooner than that!

SNAKE'S LAST STAND

MGS4 ends the Solid Snake era – but will it end Solid Snake?



**RAIDEN:
FROM
ZERO TO
HERO?**

Many American gamers loathed the main playable character in *MGS2*, but he was a big hit in Japan. Kojima promises he'll be a real badass in *MGS4*, so we may be looking at the *MGS* saga's next "Snake."

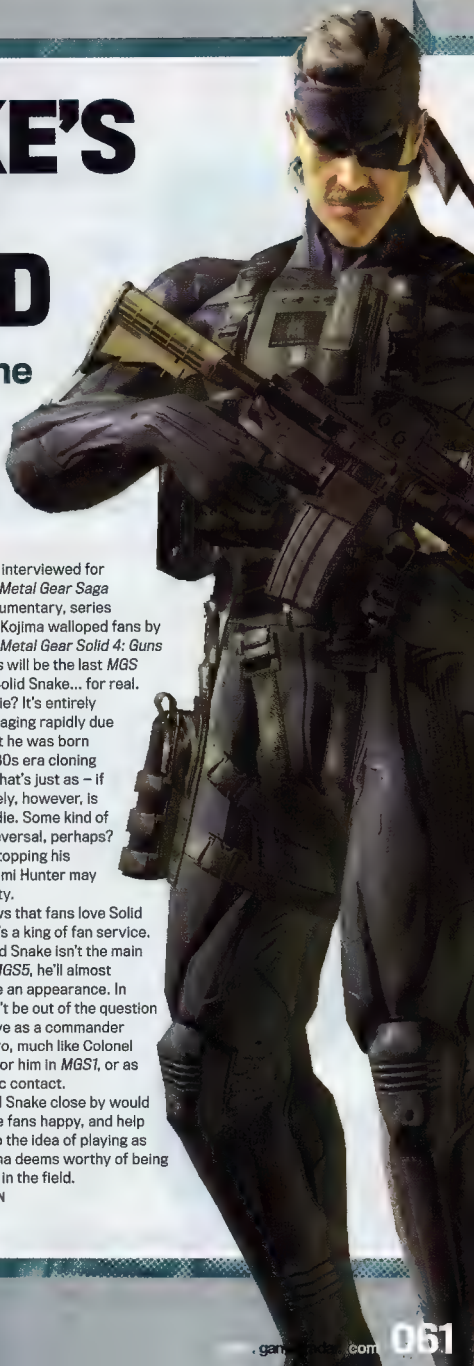
When interviewed for the *Metal Gear Saga* documentary, series creator Hideo Kojima wallowed fans by revealing that *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of The Patriots* will be the last *MGS* game to star Solid Snake... for real.

So, will he die? It's entirely possible. He's aging rapidly due to the fact that he was born of imperfect '80s era cloning technology. What's just as – if not more – likely, however, is that he won't die. Some kind of magical age reversal, perhaps? Unlikely, but stopping his aging? Dr. Naomi Hunter may have that ability.

Kojima knows that fans love Solid Snake, and he's a king of fan service. So even if Solid Snake isn't the main character in *MGS5*, he'll almost certainly make an appearance. In fact, it wouldn't be out of the question for him to serve as a commander to the new hero, much like Colonel Campbell did for him in *MGS1*, or as a helpful codec contact.

Having Solid Snake close by would keep long-time fans happy, and help ease them into the idea of playing as whoever Kojima deems worthy of being his successor in the field.

RANDY NELSON



GTA CENTRAL



PRIME TIME Could the mysterious *Vice City Stories* be a show for Spike TV?

GRAND THEFT AUTO TV?

Move over, Sopranos; a new mob may be gunning for cable

With one of the biggest audiences of any entertainment property, many have wondered when *Grand Theft Auto* will expand beyond gaming into other areas, such as movies and TV. According to Variety.com, we may finally have our answer.

The film industry site reports that Spike TV is considering an action/drama that is

either inspired by *GTA*, or officially based on *GTA*, that would premier as early as Summer 2007. Adding to this story is the fact that the recently filled copyright for *Vice City Stories* covers the use of movies and TV. Hmm...

As always, keep your eyes glued right here to *GTA Central* for future updates on all things *Grand Theft Auto*. CHRIS SLATE



LONDON CALLING

Rumor has it that the next *GTA* might be set in London, where the series went once before in 1999's *GTA: London 1969* mission pack for the PC and PS one versions of *GTA 2*.

The Next GTA Games

EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT THE NEW PSP, PS2, AND PS3 TITLES

We don't make it a habit of wading through game publishers' boring financial statements, but some interesting *GTA* tidbits were revealed in Take-Two's recent earnings report.

First, the company – which publishes all of Rockstar's titles, including the *Grand Theft Auto* series – has laid down a whopping \$25 million to secure "key Rockstar personnel" for the next three

years. As Take-Two put it, the company realizes that it is

"highly dependent on the expertise, skills, and knowledge of certain of our Rockstar employees responsible for the content, creation and development of *Grand Theft Auto* and other titles." It's nice to know that the high quality of the series shouldn't be dropping anytime soon.

Now, about the next games. At press time, the PS2 version of *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories* is planned for release in late April, so it should be on store shelves

now. An all-new *GTA* has been confirmed for PSP, and will release later this year. Coincidentally, the title *Vice City Stories* was trademarked by Take-Two on March 21st – seems like an obvious fit, doesn't it?

The PS2 will likely get more *GTA* love in the near future, as well. After PS3's *Liberty City Stories* made its way onto the console, it's an easy guess that the next handheld title will also migrate over. A multi-million selling series like this isn't likely to abandon gaming's biggest market just because the PS3 is all new and shiny.

We know that all of you are dying for a PS3 *GTA* though, despite the fact that none of you own the new console yet. While nobody has given any official information on



MORE STORIES PSP gets another *GTA* later this year.

the game, Take-Two did say that, for 2007, the company anticipates a strong next-generation lineup from Rockstar Games, including sequels to several of Rockstar's most successful franchises. We've bugged the hell out of Rockstar for more info, but they've only said not to expect a PS3 *GTA* this year, or before enough PS3s are out there to fully support the launch of such a highly anticipated game. Personally, we're placing our bets on late next year. When the game does arrive, chances are good that we'll finally be playing *GTA* online in some fashion – not just because PS3 will offer a free, massive online service, but also because Rockstar North (which develops the *GTA* console games) has posted several job ads looking for network programmers. CHRIS SLATE

NICE 'N VICE Will *Vice City* return on PSP? Chances are good.



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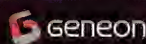
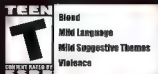
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PlayStation 2

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After a rocky start, Sony's handheld is finally showing it's got game

PSP: NOT JUST FOR MOVIES ANYMORE

Admit it: after you got used to graphics looking that good on a handheld, and after your lust over its gorgeous screen died down, you looked over at your PSP one day and just didn't give a damn. Old PS one rehashes? Stripped-down PS2 ports? Sony's do-everything super-gadget had done next to nothing when it came to games. Finally, that's changing.

Game Time

Recent months have seen a sudden surge of top-notch titles, led by Sony's own *Pursuit Force*, *Daxter*, *SOCOM* and *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror*. This is the type of original, quality lineup that the system has desperately needed. Other publishers have added a few more gems, like *Metal Gear ACID 2* and the quirky-fun *Exit*. Many more games are about to be announced at E3, and we've got our eye on some hot prospects. Sony's wonderfully goofy *LocoRoco*, for instance, could be the next big *Katamari*-style surprise hit.

Despite the slow buildup of must-have titles, PSP has been successful from the start with over 15 million units shipped worldwide. That number is likely to grow faster than ever now that a bare-bones PSP package is available for \$199. Plus, great games aren't the only things Sony plans to bring to PSP this year.

Here Come The Gadgets

Games, movies, music and web surfing still not enough for you? PSP is about to get two major new upgrades with the USB camera and GPS attachments that Sony first hinted at two years ago. The camera will ship in September under Sony's EyeToy brand and come with its own version of PS2's *EyeToy Play*, a collection of mini-games that use the camera. A few other publishers are also working on EyeToy-compatible PSP games.





NEW TOYS These early designs (from the 2004 E3 expo) hint at what we can expect to see from the PSP's final camera and GPS.

There are GPS compatible titles in the works, too, but the peripheral's immediate attraction is likely to be navigation software. The GPS (Global Positioning System) takes 40 seconds to first triangulate where you are, with an update rate of once per second after that. Curiously, a new version of *Hot Shots Golf* has been announced as one of the first games to take advantage of the add-on. Exactly how it will work is a mystery; Sony has only stated that players will be able to download golf course data.

Major New Features

A Springtime firmware update will add RSS channel support for audio, so you can use PSP to subscribe to Podcasts. Macromedia Flash 6.0 will be added to the PSP web browser, plus support for Chinese fonts. The update will also include the

software needed to run the GPS and camera, even though they won't be available until later.

Video RSS channel support will come this Summer, and sometime in either Fall or Winter, another firmware upgrade will add video and voice communication. [As we revealed months ago, video chat will get a big push with the PSP EyeToy.] Here's a cool bit of news: this same update will allow players to download a selection of games directly to Memory Stick. Sony will kick this new service off with a number of top PS one titles, with the hope of having most of the system's entire library available at some point down the road.

Gettin' Busy With PS3

The final, and most exciting, part of Sony's PSP plan involves the PS3. We've heard whispers from those in the know that the two systems will be inseparable, with

Sony determined to connect them both in as many ways as possible.

Just imagine how cool it would be to stream movies and music from your PS3's hard drive to your PSP, anywhere in the world... or how neat it would be just to use your PSP as a PS3 controller or remote. Well, it's happening, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Things will really get crazy when Sony ties PSP into its new PlayStation online network, which will likely happen early next year. We're sure to see more add-ons, too; possibly the tiny touch keyboard design that Sony's shown before.

Falling In Love Again

PSP is starting to get its groove back, and just in time, too – strong rumors indicate that Microsoft will finally launch its own handheld game system next year, which rumormongers are hyping as a "PSP/iPod Killer". The Nintendo DS certainly hasn't escaped Sony's attention, either. Who would've thought that it would gain even more momentum since PSP launched?

No matter what the competition does, what's important for PSP owners is that their new toy is finally worth playing with. Let the games begin! CHRIS SLATE



UMD MOVIES GOING AWAY?

As PSP's games catch up, its movies are falling off. Citing poor sales, movie studios are either scaling back new titles or quitting UMDs altogether. Retailers are shrinking their UMD shelves, and some, like Wal-Mart, may stop selling them altogether.

Finally, Good Games

It's not that PSP didn't have any good titles before now, but they were few and far between. Most were simple ports of PS2 games with fewer features. These recent releases are fun as hell, were made for PSP from scratch, and are a great sign of things to come.



Daxter

A drop-dead gorgeous PSP game with the same high-quality platforming action found in the series' PS2 titles.



Exit

This quick-'n'-quirky action/puzzle time-waster is perfect for gaming on the go.



Me and My Katamari

All of the bizarre ball-rolling fun of the cult favorite, pocket-sized.



Metal Gear ACID 2

Bite-sized morsels of *Metal Gear* with more flair and features than the first *ACID*.



Pursuit Force

Jackin' cars at 100MPH makes this one of the handheld's most original titles, with intense action and a fun arcade-throwback feel.



SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo

Now bathroom breaks won't stop PS2's most popular online community from gunning each other down.



Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror

PSP's first exclusive, full-fledged action/stealth game also happens to be the best *Syphon Filter* title on any platform.



WARNING: GAMES ARE UNDER ATTACK!



Your favorite hobby is in more danger than you realize – here's what you need to know

We take it for granted that videogames are here to stay, and that we'll continue to be able to buy and play the types of games we love. Unfortunately, there are a variety of dangers threatening to change that.

We've compiled a list of the threats that every gamer needs to be aware of, outlined how bad things could get, and suggested actions that all of us can take to ensure continued smooth sailing. If you don't believe that videogames could ever be in danger of going away, just ask Atari about the first time the industry crashed in 1984.

BY CHRIS SLATE

Threat: RISING COSTS

This is really a two-part problem: the rising costs that game developers face in making competitive games, and the rising costs consumers are being asked to pay in return. We're already seeing the average price of a next-generation title jump up by \$10, and whether you think that's a fair price or not, many consumers simply don't have that kind of cash lying around. Will gaming price itself out of the reach of gamers?

Even bad games take years and cost millions of dollars to make. Because of this, a few bombs in a row can put a perfectly healthy publisher under. Adding to the problem, just because a game gets made, there's no guarantee that stores will actually sell it. With more new titles releasing each month than ever before, shelf space is limited. A publisher's future can depend on whether or not the guy running Wal-Mart thinks RPGs are cool, has a problem with the amount of blood a gunshot causes, or gets what a "Katamari" is.

For game makers, the change over to the next generation will be one of the most challenging periods in gaming history. We're leaving behind the days when small teams of visionaries could strike gold with the next big hit, and entering a time of movie-level production. Hopefully, any big missteps will be kept under control as publishers adjust to the massive growth.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO:

Many more game publishers go out of business while trying to



RAISING THE BAR TOO HIGH?

Few game publishers are talented enough – or have the resources – to produce a *Metal Gear Solid 4*-quality masterpiece. Will they be able to keep up, or will they be crushed under ballooning budgets?

stay competitive with costly and time consuming next-generation titles. Games get so expensive that fewer people can afford to play them, and we lose much of the mainstream following that the industry has worked so hard to gain over the last decade. Gaming returns to being more of a niche hobby, supported by the diehard crowd that will (and can) pay whatever they have to in order to keep playing.

WHAT WILL LIKELY HAPPEN:

Many publishers won't be able to keep pace, but more than enough will. The first round of PS3 games will require a huge up-front investment in new technologies and manpower, but as time goes on the process will be refined and costs will (for the most part) be brought under control.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Not much, unfortunately. Don't pirate games, avoid buying used, and don't do anything else that doesn't put money back into the big machine that keeps turning out the new games. Try to support those smaller titles

that, while probably not the most "next-gen" looking, offer something new and worthwhile.

Threat: USED GAMES

Nobody would blame you for trying to save a few bucks, but do you realize how badly used game sales hurt the game publishers? You went into the store ready to hand them \$50-\$60, but by buying a used copy, you gave all of your cash to the retailer instead. Publishers don't see a dime from used game sales, and when they don't get their cut, things get bad for gamers. For starters, prices can go up, and the riskier, more innovative projects get shelved in favor of safer, more generic games.

Typically, only specialist shops like EB and Gamestop sell used games, which is already a big enough problem. However, what's really got publishers scared is the prospect of other, bigger store chains joining in. Late last year, a few Best Buy stores started selling used games as a test to see if they should take the program nationwide. If Wal-Mart – by far the biggest seller of videogames – were to start selling used games, it could very well kill the industry.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO:

More and bigger store chains begin to sell used games, causing sales of new games to keep

“EVEN BAD GAMES
TAKE YEARS AND COST
MILLIONS OF DOLLARS
TO MAKE”

C067 dropping. In response, publishers are forced to raise prices, which only drives more people to buy used. With less cash coming in, games are made with shrinking budgets, lower ambition, and less innovation.

WHAT WILL LIKELY HAPPEN:

Specialist stores will continue to push used games, but the bigger chains will maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with game publishers. Retail outlets count on strong game sales as much as the publishers do, and if push came to shove, nobody would win.

Game makers will work as fast as possible to circumvent retail by making digital distribution a legitimate alternative.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

If a new copy of a game is only a few more bucks than the used one, spring for it. Show your support for the hobby you enjoy. If your budget's tight, try renting most games first to avoid wasting money on bad ones, then use the extra cash you save to buy new.



SHOULD THIS BE BANNED?

Some in the government want to stop games like *GTA* from being sold to anyone, no matter how old they are.

Threat: THE GOVERNMENT

It never fails — just when one politician eases off an anti-gaming rant, another one picks up the torch and pitchfork to rally the mob all over again. Never mind that Mature-rated titles make up a tiny minority of all games published, or the fact that games have been proven to build skills such as problem solving — videogames are the work of the devil. If some in Washington had their way, we'd all be playing *Spongebob Squarepants* — that is, if we were even allowed to play games at all.

It seems like common sense that all of the soapbox shouting will never get the rabble-rousers anywhere; how could they walk all over our freedoms by dictating to us what we're allowed to play and enjoy? However, as a wise bumper sticker once said, "Never underestimate the power of stupid people in large groups."

In today's tense, often oversensitive climate, we're only a teen tragedy or presidential campaign away from serious restrictions being placed on videogames. Whether you see games as mindless entertainment or as a higher art form, you want to play what you want to play, no strings attached. Imagine, if in an effort to stop or censor the "culturally insensitive" *Grand Theft Auto* series, rules are established that tie other games up in red tape. Maybe you can't have the freedom to do whatever you want

In a game, because you might do something bad. Maybe Snake can't even smoke his cigarette in *Metal Gear*. Maybe a game including swear words, blood, or terrorists automatically gets an AO rating, in which case no store will sell it, meaning that the game can't even be made in the first place.

Don't think it can happen? The comic book industry was similarly blamed for corrupting society's youth decades ago, and was forced into government-approved content guidelines. The restrictions ranged from not showing drug use to not showing a werewolf. Comics weren't seen as a respectable medium worthy of the same rights and freedoms afforded to others, which is how some people view games now.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO:

More and more anti-game legislation passes, even on a national level. In restricting the sale of mature games to keep them away from minors, adults don't get to play them either. The government officially categorizes games as being something less than other mediums like movies and music, stunting the continued growth of our still-new and evolving form of entertainment.

WHAT WILL LIKELY HAPPEN:

There will continue to be the occasional outcry against lightning rod games like *Grand Theft Auto*. People that have never played the game will continue to use misleading descriptions like "hooker murder simulator." If the



USED AND ABUSED Buying a used game might save you a few bucks, but the game's creators won't see a dime.

THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY WAS SIMILARLY BLAMED FOR CORRUPTING SOCIETY'S YOUTH

constitution does its job though, the overall damage done should be kept to a minimum.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Make your voice heard! Write to senators, congressmen, governors — anyone who could affect the future of videogames. Be patient with those who don't "get" gaming, and help dispel misconceptions about our hobby. Write to the media when they get their facts wrong or sensationalize the issue.

Threat: BORED GAMERS

When the videogame market crashed in 1984, people had become tired of playing the same games over and over under different names. "In this game, you're a red block that shoots white lines; in that one, you're a green block shooting black lines!" While the vastly improved power of today's game consoles provides much more variety, we've been recycling games for awhile now. To the general "Joe Gamer" at large, how different, really, is *Splinter Cell* from *Metal Gear*? Or even *SOCOM*, for that matter? Longtime gamers are trained to spot the tiniest differences from game to game, such as a fast food junkie might

stress the difference between a Big Mac, a Whopper, and a Quarter Pounder. The point, however, is that after awhile, maybe you just aren't hungry for a hamburger.

Consider that we've never gone this many console generations in a row without a rejuvenating shift in how games are played. The NES started modern gaming, then the Super NES and Genesis evolved it. PlayStation and N64 switched gaming to 3D, then PS2, Gamecube, and Xbox evolved it. Historically speaking, we're due for a bigger turn in the road than an even-more-real-looking *Gran Turismo*.

If gaming doesn't continue to dazzle us with unexpected twists and turns, at least every now and then, many gamers may find that they've had their fill of hamburgers. What then? Does gaming crash and start over again? Is that a real possibility? Hopefully, we won't have to find out.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO:

Once the newness of PS3's graphics wears off, players begin to tire of the same kinds of games they've played for years. Without compelling new innovations to keep them hooked, people spend less time gaming in favor of a million other entertainment choices.

WHAT WILL LIKELY HAPPEN:

While we won't see as many major shifts in gaming as in the past, we'll continue to get just

enough innovation to keep things interesting. With next-generation games getting more expensive, however, many will question whether they really need to pay to play yet another version of the same old thing.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Super Mario Bros., *Doom*, and *Street Fighter II* were all strange and unusual when they debuted. Take a chance on offbeat titles; at least rent one every so often. That weird, quirky, crazy-looking game could be the next big thing.

Threat: PIRACY

Unlike those annoying ads you're forced to watch at the beginning of DVDs, we're not going to tell you that piracy is as bad as stealing a car, or stabbing a guy in the eye, or whatever, but face it: it's still stealing. If you illegally download a game, or buy an illegal copy, the people who made the game aren't getting the cash you'd have given them for the real deal.

Who cares about the fat-cat game publishers anyway, right? They still sell millions of games, and probably roll around in piles of money just to make themselves smell like money. Well, actually, this market is so competitive that most games lose money. Even big, longtime publishers are often operating under serious



GAMING HAS DIED BEFORE

In late 1983/early 1984, the videogame market — then led by the Atari 2600 system — tanked. New games went straight into bargain bins for five bucks a pop. Gaming laid dormant over the next couple of years until the release of Nintendo's NES console re-sparked interest. Could a similar crash happen today?

THE MARKET IS SO COMPETITIVE THAT MOST GAMES LOSE MONEY

SKATE BORED

Will longtime series with prettier graphics keep players happy?





GAMING'S COMIC CONNECTION
Comic books and games have a lot in common: both have been blamed for corrupting America's youth; both were first labeled as niche hobbies for geeks; and both have spawned some of the worst movies ever made. What important lessons can the comics industry teach us?

PRO financial trouble, and piracy costs the games industry billions of dollars each year. That's lost funds that could have gone into making bigger and better games.

Maybe you wouldn't have bought the game anyway; maybe it was only worth playing if it was free. That sounds harmless enough, but it's just sooo easy to get used to not paying. Fact: if paying for a game was the only way to ever get it, more people would step up and put cash down on the table.

We're not trying to sound preachy here, but if you want to continue to enjoy videogames, you have to chip in. In the long run, piracy makes things worse for everyone who enjoys games.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO:

Piracy continues to run rampant with more bootlegs, more mod chips, and more games passed around online. The lost profits push more small- to mid-sized publishers out of business, and those remaining hike up prices and can't take chances on innovating.

WHAT WILL LIKELY HAPPEN:

Scarily, the worst-case scenario isn't far from the most likely one. Tougher copy protection is on the way for next-generation consoles like the PlayStation 3, but no new game system has ever been able to keep piracy at bay for long. Hopefully, new revenue streams — such as selling game downloads online — will help publishers make up for profits lost to piracy.



WHY SELL A GAME ONCE WHEN YOU CAN SELL IT FIVE TIMES RIGHT?

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Don't pirate games! Seriously, at least rent them, which kicks some cash back up the line. If you know people that like to brag about how many games they've downloaded for free, let 'em know how they're damaging their favorite hobby.

Threat: GOING DIGITAL

Sony and Microsoft are hyping a new age of "HD" gaming, where gamers will ideally play on HDTVs and download a growing amount of game and multimedia content direct to their consoles. Over the next several years, game publishers will even try to skip retail stores completely by downloading full games straight to the consumer's living room.

Publishers continue to drool over the prospect of selling extra game content online, including "episodic content," whereby games are split into smaller chunks and sold independently of each other. Why sell a game once when you can sell it five times, right?

With more consoles going online,

publishers are seeing big \$\$\$ in these new digital distribution business models. They're racing towards major fundamental changes to the market that aren't primarily targeted at making gaming better for gamers, but rather, getting more money out of them. Sometimes the consumer benefit will be there, sometimes it may not. Will players go along for the ride, or be resistant to change?

WORST-CASE SCENARIO:

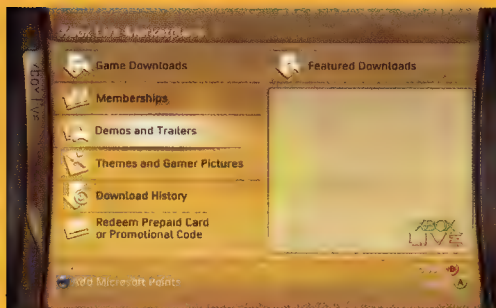
The simple act of browsing and buying games becomes complex and puts off many would-be players. Publishers rush out unfinished games and sell the features that they cut later on as "bonus content." Gamers revolt against the idea of trading a physical, boxed copy of a game for a purely digital one. You can't take a game to a friend's house because it only exists on your hard drive. Publishers get too eager to take business online and leave the average consumer behind.

WHAT WILL LIKELY HAPPEN:

Publishers will push to see just what consumers will tolerate and pay for, and occasionally they'll stumble as we enter this bold new frontier. Most games will still be sold in stores for years to come, but a growing number of titles will be sold exclusively as downloads.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Be vocal. Let the publishers know when they're doing things the right way and when they're not. As always, the best way to be heard is to speak with your dollars. Reward those who get it right, and don't go easy on the ones who take gaming in the wrong direction. **END**



■ DIGITAL DANGERS

Microsoft's Xbox 360 has already established a robust online marketplace, and Sony plans to offer much more. Is this a great new day for gamers, or just a way to bleed more cash out of us?

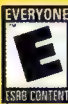
OK TO PLAY?

CHECK THE RATINGS ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX

ON FRONT



ON BACK



Comic Mischief
Mild Lyrics

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

ESRB
Entertainment Software
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PSP presents

INDEPENDENT
PLAYSTATION
MAGAZINE

The Essential PSP HANDBOOK

Your **MUST-HAVE GUIDE** to
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ON JULY 18th!**



REVIEWS

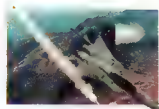


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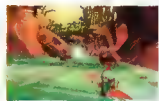


The Best of the Month



Ace Combat Zero: The Belkan War

9/10



Daxter

9/10



OutRun 2006: Coast to Coast

9/10



Suikoden V

8/10

PSM Scores Explained

PSM SCORE
10
out of 10

LEGENDARY
A masterpiece we'll remember for years to come.

PSM SCORE
9.0
out of 10

OUTSTANDING
One of the best games you'll play all year.

PSM SCORE
8.0
out of 10

GREAT
As good as you can normally expect - buy it!

PSM SCORE
7.0
out of 10

GOOD
A fun game that's well worth playing.

PSM SCORE
6.0
out of 10

OKAY
An average experience in every way.

PSM SCORE
5.0
out of 10

RISKY
Even fans of the series/genre should beware.

PSM SCORE
4.0
out of 10

FOUR AND BELOW

Games in this tier range from bad to absolutely worthless. They're really not worth your time, and definitely not worth your money. Anything below a three isn't worth renting, even for laughs.

PSM SCORE
3.0
out of 10

PSM SCORE
2.0
out of 10

PSM SCORE
1.0
out of 10

How We Review

Nobody knows PlayStation games like PSM - our experts have reviewed every one of them for the past 10 years. To help you quickly separate the best from the rest, we spotlight our "Best of the Month" titles with feature coverage. Big review or small, we play every game through to the end to give you the most accurate analysis. Finally, our independent status is your guarantee that our opinions aren't influenced by any corporate bias. We appreciate your trust, and we'll never steer you wrong.

GAME OF THE MONTH

2: Kingdom Hearts II

THIS DISNEY RPG ISN'T JUST FOR KIDS

NEW LOOK

KHZ's Sora is a little bit older, a little bit wiser, and sporting some cool new threads.

PSM SCORE

8.5
out of 10

Few games can be described as **magical**, but this is definitely one of them. In combining characters and worlds from both **Disney** and **Square Enix**, then tossing in some **solid**, if simple, combat and heartfelt moments, they've created a game that will go down in history as the ultimate love letter to all their fans.



The first *Kingdom Hearts* was quite literally a dream come true. Accompanied by the surprisingly scrappy duo of Donald Duck and Goofy, you explored various Disney locations while fighting enemies and meeting beloved characters from Disney films and *Final Fantasy* games. What's not to love?

Evidently, gamers everywhere, including our readers, agreed. The game sold through the roof, and for over two years now, practically 80% of the mail we've received has told us that you want — nay, *need* — *Kingdom Hearts II* more than any other game on Earth. Well, congratulations — it's finally here, and it's great.



THE KEYBLADE

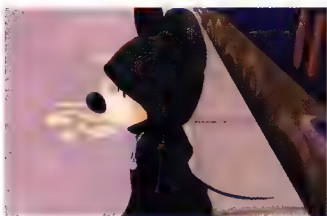
It has all the strengths of keys and blades, but none of their weaknesses.

SHORYUKEN

Combat is simpler in *KH2*, but is that a good or bad thing?

HEY MICKEY

King Mickey is back as well, and plays a bigger role than he did in *KH1*.



Sure, the gameplay is a little rough around the edges (just like the original), but this game ignores the rules by giving you exactly what you want (again, just like the original). This game's strength is pure, 200-proof charisma (just like... you get the idea), and that makes it almost hypnotically captivating. It's got its flaws, but we simply couldn't stop playing it because it was just too magical, too interesting, and too wild to put down.

Heart of the matter

Players of the original *Kingdom Hearts* will definitely be thrown for a loop by the beginning of *KH2* since Mickey, Goofy, Donald, and Sora don't show up until several hours into the game. Instead, we find ourselves in Twilight Town, where a teen named Roxas is enjoying the last few days of his summer vacation by hanging out with his friends, eating ice cream, and getting into fights with *Final Fantasy* characters like *FFVII*'s Seifer and *FFIX*'s Vivi.

Roxas's problem is that he's seeing things. In his dreams, he sees Sora (though he doesn't know who Sora is), and when he's awake, he keeps catching glimpses of mysterious dudes in black cloaks.



Then, a barrage of characters are introduced: the bandage-headed DIZ, the red-haired man-in-black, Axel, another robed man calling himself Ansem (the name of *KH1*'s main enemy), and a witchy girl named Naminé (from the Game Boy Advance *Kingdom Hearts* game, *Chain of Memories*). Right about then, the series' new enemies – the silver, slithering Nobodies – show up and Roxas gets a keyblade.

What the heck is going on?

In fact, very little is explained even when old friends Sora, Donald, and Goofy turn up, still looking for King Mickey and Sora's lost buddy, Riku. Obviously, you're going to have to play this **E 676**



HIKKI HITS THE CHARTS

Japanese pop idol Hikaru Utada recorded another hit song for the series, titled "Passion."

PIRATES AND HACKERS BEWARE!

Maybe that should be "beware of pirates and hackers," because *KH2* takes the adventure beyond Disney's animated films and into live action worlds from two different decades: *Tron* (1982) and *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003). Yay! And, uh, beep?





GOOD FRIENDS

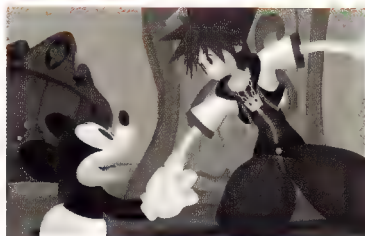
Goofy and Donald return to help Sora out once again.

076 one all the way to its end if you want the whole story. Just to warn you, though, it's crazy and complex – but it's also still pretty damn touching. It even explains the "Another Side, Another Story" CG trailer that was part of the "best ending" to the first game.

Heroic Trio

As for the gameplay itself, this is vintage *Kingdom Hearts*-style Action RPG bashery, but with some important tweaks. Using magic seems much less important than before, and Sora's glide move is gone. Instead, you've got a ton of enemy-specific attacks. For instance, you can dash in a semi-circle around the basic Nobody, which will leave it disoriented and vulnerable. Of course, that's one of the basic examples; other times, you'll be able to ride Pegasus into battle against the Hydra, climb onto the back of a flying enemy, or even cut a building in half and heave it at a boss character's deserving cranium.

You can merge with Donald and Goofy to take on more powerful forms specializing in magic or physical attacks. If you'd like to stay in your own skin, there are also several more optional characters who can join your party if you're in their world: Tron, Jack Skellington, Simba from *The Lion King*, Mulan, Captain Jack



OLD SCHOOL Steamboat Willy lends Sora a hand.



ATMOSPHERE Every world seems so different from all the others, but all of them have an unmistakable Disney feel.

Sparrow, and more. There are some new summons, like Stitch, the one-alien wrecking crew, and Chicken Little. You have team-up attacks with most of these characters, and they almost always kick serious ass. Our favorite? When you're in the Space Paranoids level, Tron gives you the

ability to collect a swarm of enemy projectile attacks and reprogram them, turning them back upon their maker. It's just plain awesome.

Speaking of the various levels you'll visit, there are two big things you should know. First, traveling between them isn't sheer hell any more, because blasting your way through space in your customizable Gummi ship is actually pretty fun now. Secondly, there are cool new locations that we hadn't seen before: *Pirates of the Caribbean's* Port Royale, *Tron's* world inside a computer network, and the oddly awesome Timeless River, where everything looks primitive and is in black & white, just like the very first Mickey Mouse cartoons.

Chopping list

So, just to name off those shortcomings that you will find yourself overlooking because the game is just so cool otherwise: there's often so much going on during a fight that you lose track



THE HEARTLESS are back, too, and they're itching to get some payback on Sora and his pals.

info

PRICE
\$49.99

ESRB RATING
Everyone 10+

MULTIPLAYER
None

SUPPORT
Pro Logic II

PUBLISHED BY
Square Enix

MADE BY
Square Enix



*** DUEL OF THE FATES** Cloud and Sephiroth's epic confrontation continues in *KH2*, and it looks damn good, too.



☑ YOU'LL LOVE... the visuals in the battle against Jafar, but...



☑ YOU'LL HATE... how tedious and frustrating this fight is.

WILL PIXAR CHAR- ACTERS BE IN THE NEXT GAME?

Disney has purchased Pixar, the animation house behind hits such as *Toy Story* and *The Incredibles*, so Square Enix should have access to an amazing lineup of characters and worlds for the next *Kingdom Hearts*. (You know it has to be coming.)

of Sora (the erratic camera doesn't help), but it's okay because the combat actually seems too easy now, anyway. The plot can be too tough to follow and its pacing is erratic. Finally, some of the voice casting – Vivi and Aerith, in particular – just doesn't seem right.

Ultimately though, *Kingdom Hearts II* is one of those games with the rare power to make you forget about all of these things. It's literally not about the gameplay; it's about the overall experience. It just washes you away in the magic that is two of the world's greatest storytellers – Disney and Square Enix – coming together to make something timeless, wonderful, and unforgettable. **ALAN KIM**



☑ HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO... to fit in? Sora and co. change their outfits, and sometimes even their species, to fit the mood of the worlds they visit.

PS2: Ace Combat Zero: The Belkan War

THE NEXT BEST THING TO TAKING A \$38 MILLION JET FOR A JOYRIDE



PSM SCORE
8.0
out of 10

This series has always had a perfect blend of flight-sim realism and afterburner-fueled arcade dogfights. *Belkan War* is another successful mission in a 10-year war waged across both PlayStation and with enough tweakable fighters and open-ended missions to keep you coming back for more.

We all know firsthand the rush of slamming down on the gas pedal, blasting through traffic, and hugging the curb on tight turns. It's not a huge leap for us to get into driving games, but how do you make people truly appreciate the tactical, precise aerobatics of today's cutting-edge fighter jets? Namco's answer: release game after game crammed with stomach-spinning dogfights and authentic, customizable fighter planes.

That's exactly what the PS2 gets with *Ace Combat Zero: The Belkan War*, the sixth installment of a series that's "just real enough," yet throws in some serious sci-fi twists. In this case, it's your united front against the power-hungry nation of Belka, whose arsenal just happens to include a horizon-scorching laser tower named Excalibur.

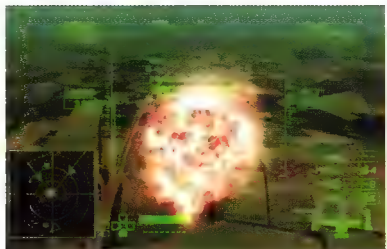
For the first time in the series, you can choose what kind of pilot

you'll be. The Ace Style Gauge lets you go total "mercenary" style (blowing everything out of the sky, main target or no) or take the noble approach as a "knight" pilot (letting damaged, de-clawed enemies scuttle away). There's also the middle ground: sticking to the rules, getting the job done without any special flair. The game calls that rank a "soldier." We say you'd better choose sides to make things interesting. How you play can change in-flight reactions and even the ending, so plan on a little more time in the sky.

While the guts of the game are much like the past titles, *The Belkan War* mixes things up by throwing rival ace pilots at you. You're zooming along, taking care of jets, gunboats or ground targets, when suddenly an armada of pimped-out fighters drops in. These guys are serious business, cutting loops and dodging missiles like you wouldn't

“THESE GUYS ARE SERIOUS BUSINESS. CUTTING LOOPS & DODGING MISSILES LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE”

believe. Even hardcore *Ace* players will suffer a few high-altitude deaths at their hands. When it's you against five tough pilots, zipping in and out of smoke



THE SIM-PLIE LIFE

Paris Hilton won't be riding in your cockpit, but you will have a simulated heads-up display that changes depending on which plane you fly.

FIGHTERS FOR DUMMIES

Each jet's capabilities are plainly explained for rookies.





Info

Platform	PlayStation 2
Price	\$39.99
ESRB Rating	Teen
Multiplayer	Two-player split-screen
Supports	•Pro Logic II •Widescreen
Publisher	NAMCO BANDAI
Made by	NAMCO BANDAI

streams and lens flares, there's no time to plan.... only to fire.

Beyond the rivals' ramped-up intelligence, there's still not much in the way of mission variation throughout this war story. A few larger sorties let you choose in which wave of the assault you'll fly, but it all boils down to shooting, shooting, and, yes, more shooting. There's not even much in the way of defense; most missions are all about pushing Belka back into its borders.

The gameplay still rocks, no doubt, but even the graphics are starting to slip this late in the PS2 life cycle. The various ice-capped mountains, evergreen forests and sun-soaked seas look sharp from

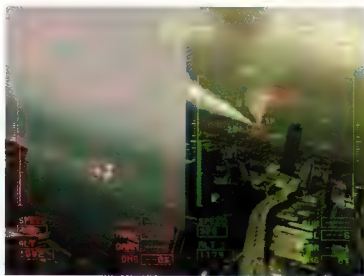
10,000 feet, but get much closer and you'll start to see just how badly this Belkan war has ruined the landscape.

Interspersed amongst this dated-but-dizzying game are a series of old-school, full-motion video flashbacks. Yes, starring real people. The narrative gives you a look at Belka's fallen aces years after the war, but comes off as too "early days of CD games" for our tastes.

Still, even though the coating is a little stale and the mechanics at work are slightly overused, *The Belkan War* soars above other air combat titles, PS2 or otherwise.

BRETT ELSTON

MISSED ME BY THAT MUCH Harrowing maneuvers can be pulled off with ease on the Dual Shock 2.



STILL NO ONLINE, but split-screen's fun enough.

F: Daxter

NO JAK? NO PROBLEM. DAXTER'S ADVENTURE IS THE PSP'S BEST

PSM SCORE
8.5
out of 10

Daxter is definitely **PSP's best platformer** right now, successfully capturing the essence of what made the *Jak* games so great on PS2. While the **story is not very compelling**, the game is still an undeniably solid title that best exemplifies what PSP platformers should be.

To be honest, we were a little nervous about *Daxter*. Oh, we were fairly certain that it was going to be an enjoyable game, but, well, we've been burned before when it comes to platformers on the PSP. So how does the annoying little ottsel fare in his portable solo adventure? Rather well, actually.

What makes the game enjoyable is that it successfully captures much of what makes the *Jak* games so enjoyable: as always, the characters are interesting, and revisiting Haven City – even in this smaller scale – feels like a pleasant homecoming.

More important, however, is that this game serves as a prime example of how platformers should be designed for the PSP. Jumping on random stuff and smacking around Metal Head bugs with Daxter's arsenal of bug-busting gear is simply a joy.

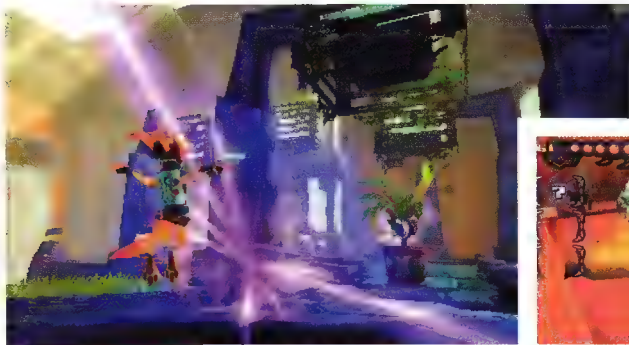
Sure, there are the occasional camera issues, but they are far less prevalent than they are in other, similar PSP titles.

The vehicle segments – a must for a *Jak* game – help keep things varied, and it's these portions in particular that really show off the game's graphical quality. To top it all off, the loading times are impressively quick. A minor issue is that there is a bit of slow down as the game saves while you're playing, but this is by no means a deal-breaker when everything else is this solid.

The major problem that holds the game back, though, is the story: it feels a little lackluster,

mainly serving to tie the different missions together while never really addressing Jak's eventual rescue until the latter portion of the game. It would've been nice to at least have a few more plot points that link back to the first two *Jak* adventures, but at least the scenes that are present here are engaging enough to keep you going forward.

Other complaints include Daxter's dream sequences, which are mini-games that make use



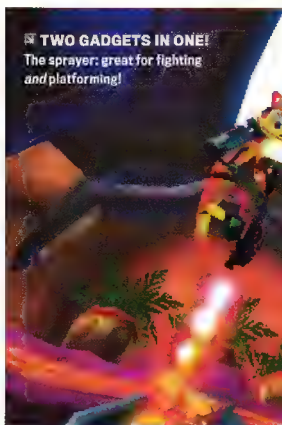
A VENUS BOOBY TRAP Daxter's got to be quick on his feet to avoid getting shot.



POCKET MONSTERS Wireless bug battles are so-so.



THAT'S FAIR Daxter might need a bigger bug-swatter...



A PRIME EXAMPLE OF HOW PLATFORMERS SHOULD BE DESIGNED FOR THE PSP

THE GOGGLES DO NOTHING

Go through the trouble to connect your copy of *Daxter* to *Jak 3* on PS2, and you will unlock... goggles. Daxter can wear them, but only for show. Hey, you get what you pay for.

of your finely honed reflexes to quickly press the face buttons. It's not that these sequences are a bad idea or are poorly executed – we're just ambivalent about the idea in general. On the one hand, they're entertaining enough, and

they're packed with pop culture references to *The Matrix*, *Indiana Jones*, and *Lord of the Rings*, which makes the game feel contemporary. On the other hand, though, they're pretty simplistic, and the movie references really

date the game (especially the *Matrix* scenes, since the days of *Matrix*-mania are now long gone) and remove you from the fantastic world the series has already established.

Being a PSP game, there is the requisite multiplayer mode – in this case, a bug battle – where the widgets you collect in the single-player game are used to power up a bug for use in one-on-one battles. It's a moderately entertaining diversion, but nothing that special.

Fortunately for us, though, the rest of the game *is* quite special, successfully cramming most of the stuff that we adored about the *Jak* series into a handheld that, until just recently, desperately needed some new and exciting original titles. **JUSTIN CHENG**



WHAT'S THAT SMELL? Dax doesn't have Jak's arsenal, but he does all right.

info

PS3
\$39.99

ESRB RATING
Everyone

MULTIPLAYER
Two-player versus

SUPPORT
• Ad hoc multiplayer
• PS2 connectivity

PUBLISHED BY
Sony

MADE BY
Ready At Dawn

PS2 + PSP: OutRun 2006: Coast to Coast

SEGA REVS UP A DOUBLE DOSE OF ARCADE RACING



PSM SCORE
8.0
out of 10

While this sequel to the arcade classic isn't very deep, it's loads of fun. It's fast, with crazy power-slides and even crazier objectives. The PSP version is nearly identical to the PS2 game, so either one you choose, you're set for hours of pick-up-and-play enjoyment.

H OutRun is as simple as its name suggests. In the most basic arcade mode, your only goal is to make it from the starting line to one of several branching finish lines before the timer ticks down to zero. This bare-bones approach is, by no means, a bad thing – the game is challenging, plays like a dream, and is one of those rare titles that you can pop in at any time and jump right into having fun.

As in the arcade version of the game (which is called *OutRun2SP*), the PS2 and PSP versions both include the new Heart Attack Mode. This mode challenges you to perform various stunts – from ramming traffic and drifting long distances, to avoiding meteors and alien abductions – all while also trying to beat the clock.

Variations of the standard and Heart Attack modes require you to receive a high enough average grade on sections of the race map before advancing. You also rack



✓ BREEZE BY For the first time in any OutRun game, you can slipstream. Passing other cars this way is easy, and is essential to beating the clock.

up miles that can be spent on new cars, courses, music remixes, and other bonuses.

The PS2 version is vibrant, fast, and looks really great in 480p widescreen. It suffers from some occasional stuttering, but it

doesn't nix the fun. The PSP game has the same content as the PS2 title, is the same price, and is one of the best looking games on the handheld. The motion isn't quite as smooth, but the thrills are still there. If you have both versions, you can even transfer your accomplishments between them.

Six-player online racing on both systems (complete with friends lists) seals the deal – if you love racing games, you have to get this. If you have a PS2 and PSP, get both. That way, you can enjoy its pure, white-knuckle fun wherever you go. **RANDY NELSON**

info

OutRun 2006
COAST TO COAST

PRICE PS2: \$49.99
PSP: \$29.99

ESRB RATING
Everyone

MULTIPLAYER
Six-player online (PS2/PSP), six-player ad hoc (PSP)

SUPPORTS
• 480p (PS2)
• Widescreen (PS2)
• PS2 to PSP connectivity
• Online play

PUBLISHED BY
Sega

MADE BY
Sega / Sumo Digital



✓ DRIVE SIDEWAYS Sure, it's exaggerated, but drifting in this game is a blast.



✓ PORTABLE PUNCH The game is just as great on PSP as it is on PS2.

PSM SCORE
8.0
out of 10

A long, rewarding adventure that's more *Suikoden IV*, but with fair warning: the first eight hours are slow. From there on out, though, the rest is pure bliss.

info


PRICE
\$39.99
ESRB RATING
Teen
MULTIPLAYER
Single player only
PUBLISHED BY
Konami
MADE BY
Konami

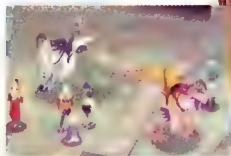
Suikoden V

AN EXPERIENCE WORTH ITS WAIT IN GOLD

I Do good things really come to those who wait?

For the fifth chapter in Konami's much beloved, sometimes hated *Suikoden* series, it depends on what you're waiting for. If you're holding out for a mind-blowing action-adventure fantasy, with top-notch graphics, that will blow the doors off all that's come before it, then your wait continues. If you're a dyed-in-the-wool, gotta-catch-'em-all collector of all 108 Stars of Destiny, however, *Suikoden V* is indeed a very, very good thing.

Speaking of waiting, though... there's a big wall of it at the start of this meaty, 45+ hour journey. Konami apparently thinks that getting into the mindset of your character should take eight to 10 hours. Only the patient players will be rewarded with what any *Suikoden* fan wants: the ability to explore a massive world, peopled with interesting folks who may or may not join your cause, while dueling it out with enemies in various cool ways. Once you



TAUNTAUNS? No. You can't stuff friends in 'em for warmth, either.

break through that long, sleepy quagmire of a start, the game really opens up and delivers an engaging storyline, incredibly memorable characters and a trio of solid combat systems that will keep you on your toes.

Sidestepping some of the pitfalls of the series' last two chapters, this one doesn't bog you down with any particularly fancy features. It keeps stock, six-member-party battles snappy and rewarding. One-on-one duels are updated by timing your entry (but retain the rock-paper-scissors structure). It also tacks

on quasi-real time, strategy-style ship and land battles. While the land/sea fights tend to be just as reliant on a rock-paper-scissors format as the one-on-one duels, what works for the duels feels shallow for the mass scrimmages... but oh, the sweet reward of building up your castle, collecting those Stars of Destiny, and leveling up your hordes of supporters. It's as addictive and satisfying as ever, and it marks a return to form for a series that's clutched so close to the hearts of role-playing purists. Just hang in there and don't let the initial multi-hour introductory trudge scare you off. **FRANCESCA REYES**



FACE-OFF Battles incorporate a fun "tug of war"-style mini-game.



GO TO TOWN The world is crowded with cool characters.



PSP: Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai

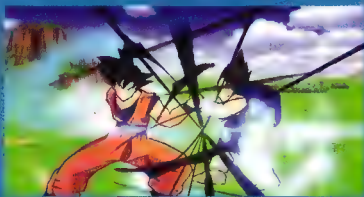
PSM SCORE
7.5
out of 10

LOTS OF FUN, EVEN IF YOU DON'T LOVE DRAGON BALL

There was a time when Dragon Ball Z games were only for hardcore fans of the anime, but the Budokai series changed all that. With the release of Shin Budokai, the series' stylish, fast-paced fighting action is now available on PSP. The controls are simplistic enough that you can learn to play in about half an hour, but the

gameplay is strong enough to offer a challenge to even the best players. Plus, if fighting computer opponents gets old, you can use the PSP's ad hoc (local) wireless capability to take on your friends. While the story mode isn't

excellent, and the game feels a bit too basic at times, the fact remains that DBZ: Shin Budokai is a solid 3D fighting game that both fans and members of the series' general audience will enjoy. **TOM HOLLOIN**



IN YOUR FACE Shin Budokai's dramatic presentation matches the animated series perfectly.



THERE'S A BETTER GAME

If you're looking to get your smash on and haven't played it yet, Sony's *War of The Monsters* is your best bet on PS2. It doesn't have online play, but it's still a blast with just two players. It got an 8.0 out of 10 in issue 68.



Tourist Trophy

PSM SCORE
7.0
out of 10

GT4 MINUS CARS, PLUS BIKES, EQUALS A SUPER-NICHE GAME

Take *Gran Turismo 4*, yank out the cars, and put in motorcycles. It does scream of something put together with minimal effort, but to say it's a total rehash would be too harsh. It benefits from GT4's slick graphics, sound, and track design (even though most of them are simply reused). The handling and sense of speed are good, but considering the realistic physics engine it's built on, the way the rider and bike interact just doesn't look right. Namco has done the genre better with its *MotoGP* series, but *Tourist Trophy* excels in its bike lineup, course selection, and sheer amount of fan service. True motorcycle fiends should hop right on without being let down. **RANDY NELSON**



Rampage: Total Destruction

PSM SCORE
6.5
out of 10

SMASH STUFF QUICK, BEFORE YOU'RE BORED

Ah, the simple joy of smashing things. This game captures it in its pure, no-frills, arcade form. In fact, it wouldn't be surprising to find this game in an arcade in the early '90s. It's a fine time-waster that's even better with friends (or in the online mode). Like the most revered arcade games of old, however, it gets mighty repetitious after only a short period of time. The addition of specific (but simple) collection-style objectives to each stage helps, as does the ability to unlock more devastating moves and new monsters. It's also a very good-looking and -sounding game. Ultimately, it's a short-lived blast at best, overshadowed by the much better *War of The Monsters*. **RANDY NELSON**



Samurai Warriors: State of War

PSM SCORE
6.0
out of 10

LOTS OF HACK, SLASH, DEFEAT, REPEAT

On PS2, *Samurai Warriors* is all about delivering fast-paced, mindless hack and slash action, and the PSP port of the game is really no different. While *State of War* includes some new tactical elements between battles, the game is pretty much identical to its PS2 counterpart, which is ultimately both a good and a bad thing. The game maintains the breakneck speed and massive army sizes of the PS2 games – quite a feat considering it's on the less powerful PSP – and it looks and sounds very crisp. However, *State of War* is still, at best, a mindless beat 'em up game, and it doesn't take very long at all before the repetitive missions lose their novelty. **TOM HOLLOIN**



PS2: Worms: Open Warfare

PSM SCORE
6.0
out of 10

BETTER THAN A POCKETFUL OF ACTUAL WORMS

If you take the plunge and pick up this game, you can be confident of the fact that it will deliver the cartoony, turn-based warfare that the *Worms* series is known for; just don't expect anything new or especially exciting. While the game has all of the many clever weapons from the series and can be entertaining at times, it also has the same repetitive single-player gameplay and never gets *really* good. It gets better as a four player game (local wireless only, or by passing a single PSP around), but there are far better multiplayer experiences available on the handheld. If you're a *Worms* fan, *Open Warfare* will merely fill your need for a portable version. If you've never liked the series before, don't expect this game to change your mind. **TOM HOLOIEN**



PS2: Atelier Iris 2: The Azoth of Destiny

PSM SCORE
6.0
out of 10

HAVEN'T WE PLAYED YOU A HUNDRED TIMES BEFORE?

After games like *Phantom Brave* and *Disgaea*, we've come to expect quality RPGs from NIS America. Unfortunately, the studio's latest title is a step backwards. Graphics don't always make a game, but in this case, they take away from it; apart from the anime cutscenes, it looks dated (but colorful). Gameplay is formulaic. Walk around dungeons, fight random monsters, complete a quest, repeat. It lacks the kind of story necessary to keep you interested for very long, making it hard to play a game that's so similar to many other, better, RPGs before it. While it does carry over the unique item synthesis system from the first game, and improves on its combat system, this alone isn't enough to make up for the game's flaws. **TOM HOLOIEN**



TONGUE TWISTERS

Just for fun, ask your retailer for these other obtuse titles:

Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga 2

Final Fantasy XI: Treasures of Aht Urhgan

Xenosaga Episode III: Also Sprach Zarathustra

Ys: The Ark of Naphishtim

Stratos Alto: Divine Fount of the Five Kings VII: Cogito Ergo Sum

(Okay, we made that last one up... or did we?)



PS2: Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Essentials

PSM SCORE
6.5
out of 10

ALSO ESSENTIAL: A SECOND ANALOG STICK
Uh-oh, Sam

Fisher's angry. The PSP has no camera-maneuvering second analog stick, making the spy's portable debut a frustrating chore. The story – set *after* the upcoming *Double Agent* with flashbacks throughout Sam's career – offers a compelling mix of new and classic *Splinter Cell* missions that get progressively better as you go. The production values are high, with excellent voice acting, impressive audio, and good graphics. All the classic series gadgets are here, like the knife and sticky shockers, but holding Circle to swivel the camera makes navigation difficult and combat even more so. The camera clipping issues, sound stutters, and eternal save/load times don't help matters, either. **RYAN MCCAFFREY**

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PSF: Me and My Katamari

PSM SCORE
7.5
out of 10

ALL THE ROLLING, HALF OF EVERYTHING ELSE

How much for it? Katamari makes you smile, with its signature visual style, stunning (albeit reused) soundtrack, and overall charming presentation. As is always the case, rolling objects is the world is a game, though now you must settle for dumb-newbie games.

UH, YEAH... Your first experience with the trippy, surreal world of Katamari will make you laugh out loud or scratch your head.

...because similar games... variety in your objectives than the two PS2 titles. While the essence of the Katamari series is still in full effect, you can't see the transition of the

games, elements... particularly the controls, which, while workable, are far less intuitive and accurate... only give you a CliffsNotes sampling of the greater Katamari experience. KAISER AWANG

COSMIC INFLATION



The original Katamari Damacy came in at the fabulous price of **\$19.99**.



We Love Katamari came in a year later at a higher but justifiable **\$29.99**.



Now, the series' shortest and most compromised version retails at a shocking **\$39.99**. We simply don't approve.

WHAT'S UP WITH THIS GAME? It's simple, really: you roll a ball around, and anything it touches—flowers, dogs, cars, whatever—sticks to it. Make it as big as you want!



ROLL WITH IT The jewels are considerably smaller in size than in the PS2 games, but most of the fun is left intact—it's just over quicker.



A CUT ABOVE The battles in Grandia III are better than ever, incorporating multi-hit "juggling."

PS2: Grandia III

PSM SCORE
7.0
out of 10

BY THE BOOKS, BUT A FEW OF THEM CONTAIN MAGIC

So far, the PS2

Grandia titles have been hit or miss. Fortunately, this third installment lives up to the series' classic blend of soaring adventure and compelling battles, this time with first-rate graphics and storytelling. In truth, it's a fairly typical set-up: a cute girl is hounded by a nasty guy, there are lots

of magical creatures, and you visit a creepy alternate world. An early burst of creativity diminishes as the game moves forward, but a rock-solid battle system picks up the slack. A new mechanic, which lets you juggle enemies in the air for greater damage, is a lot of fun to fool around with.

Unfortunately, the adventure is too predictable—particularly on a system known for awesome RPGs—but it's still distinctive enough to warrant exploration. CHRISTIAN NUTT



PSP: **Monster Hunter Freedom**

PSM SCORE
6.5
out of 10

LIKE NINTENDOGS, IF YOU COULD EAT YOUR POODLE

The import (in this case, *Monster Hunter G*) you didn't play on PS2 becomes the import you might play on PSP, a fun but exhausting cross between online RPG, fighting game, and *Jurassic Park*. In *Monster Hunter Freedom*, you customize and outfit a grunting barbarian and send him or her out into the wilderness to hunt dinosaurs. You kill it, you skin it, you cook it, you eat it. Myriad quests await, from bagging big prey to collecting little mushrooms. The video is gorgeous. Alas, ridiculous lengthy load times sap much of the fun, and the game only gets really interesting when you play with friends in ad hoc mode. **CHRISTOPHER NULL**



PSP: **Winback 2: Project Poseidon**

PSM SCORE
4.0
out of 10

WE WANT TO WINBACK THE TIME WE SPENT PLAYING

The concept behind *Winback 2* isn't completely awful: the game tries to spice up what could be just the same old shooter by offering different perspectives on the same mission. Too bad this approach makes for a lot of repetition, as you're forced to play through the same bland areas, shooting bad guys that look the same and repeat the same phrases. Plus, the game doesn't look all that hot, and the story meant to tie it all together isn't very engaging. Perhaps the most entertaining bits are the over-the-top bosses and the laughably bad voice acting, which gives the game a *Resident Evil*-style, B-movie cheesy charm. **JUSTIN CHENG**



ROCKET MEN

James Bond takes to the skies with a jetpack, putting him in great company:



Boba Fett



The Rocketeer



Robocop...?



PSP: **From Russia With Love**

PSM SCORE
6.0
out of 10

A PSP PORT, NEITHER SHAKEN NOR STIRRED

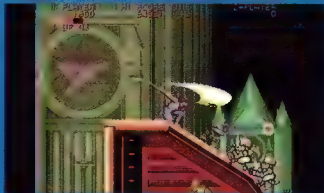
From Russia with Love is yet another by-the-books PSP port—that is to say, they've taken the PS2 game, shrunk it down to a portable size, reduced the graphical quality, stripped out some of the levels (thereby shortening the already relatively brief PS2 game's length), and tried to make the controls work on the second-analog-stick-less handheld. What hurts the game the most, though, is that you have a tendency to be shot at by enemies you can't see due to the way the sluggish camera works in conjunction with the gunplay. Everything else is pretty standard stuff, but it has its Bondish moments, mainly thanks to the vocal talents of Sean Connery. **JUSTIN CHENG**

PSP: **Capcom Classics Collection Remixed**

PSM SCORE
7.0
out of 10

UNLIKE WINE, SOME GAMES DON'T IMPROVE WITH AGE

This is one of the rare, genuinely good retro classics compilations, let down only slightly by PSP's limitations and a so-so selection of games. Developer Digital Eclipse has done a fantastic job with the look and presentation, impressing with impeccable emulation, a good interface, comprehensive resolution and multiplayer options, plus unlockable bonuses for all 20 games. However, a lot of the games lack serious play value for overly 1984 or Three Wonders



K SPACE NINJA Strider rocked arcades in 1989 with its unique wall/ceiling climbing and low-gravity platforming.

are seen *Avengers* or *Street Fighter*, and even some of the ones haven't aged well: try enduring *Final Fight*. The PSP's unweildy keypad and screen blur hurt, too. Even with these flaws, *Remixed* remains a mostly nifty blast from the past. **BENJAMIN TURNER**



The List OF RECENT BEST GAMES

PS2:



Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence

What can we say about *Metal Gear Solid 3*, other than that it's pretty much awesome in every way? *Subsistence*, the director's cut of *Snake Eater*, offers the same amazing game as the original while adding great new features, like a new camera and an online mode. Packed with extras and bonuses, there is nothing about *Subsistence* that we don't like.

Score: 10



Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition REMIX

Rockstar's *Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition* was already one of the best racers on PS2, and the *REMX* edition builds on that solid foundation. With a whole new racing locale (Tokyo), over 20 new cars, and an online mode, *Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition REMIX* offers all the same high-speed street racing fun as the original with great new features – all for a mere \$20.

Score: 9.5



Fight Night Round 3

The third offering in EA's *Fight Night* series has all of its predecessors' good points and almost none of their faults. Boasting stunning visuals, new and improved game modes, and an innovative control scheme, *Fight Night Round 3* captures all the excitement and strategy of the sport, making it a great game for both fans and non-fans of boxing alike.

Score: 9.0



MLB 2006: The Show

Although EA holds the top titles for most of sports games, Sony's *MLB 2006: The Show* manages to dethrone EA's *MVP* series with a huge variety of gameplay modes and an incredible sense of realism. From the beautiful graphics to the detailed gameplay, *MLB '06: The Show* is one of the most realistic baseball sims ever made.

Score: 9.0



Tomb Raider Legend

Lara makes a triumphant return to glory with a game that has a good story, great controls, and fantastic visuals. While some levels are more fun than others, Lara brings all-new equipment and moves with her, making for the great platforming, tomb-exploring experience that we've been waiting for since we played the first *Tomb Raider*.

Score: 8.5



BUY THE GODS!

God of War II is on this issue's cover, because the original game was so damn good – good enough to have been inducted into Sony's Greatest Hits lineup, which means you can pick it up for a measly \$19.99. At this price, there's no excuse for any PS2 owner not to own it (well, unless they're under 17; it's rated M).

ESSENTIAL PS2 RPGS

You can't let this generation pass without embarking on these amazing adventures.



Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest



Dark Cloud 2



Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of The Cursed King



Final Fantasy X-2



Shadow Hearts: Covenant

PSP:



Metal Gear ACID 2

While the *ACID* series gives a different take on the *Metal Gear* franchise, *ACID 2* manages to feel like a *Metal Gear* game despite the card-based gameplay. Controls and movement have been improved, and trivial actions, like flattening against a wall, no longer cost you a turn. While waiting for the right card can be frustrating, *Metal Gear ACID 2* is a solid game that most anyone can enjoy.

Score: 8.5



Fight Night Round 3

One of the prettiest games you'll find for PSP, *Fight Night Round 3* captures the essence of the PS2 version without losing much in translation. While the lack of a second analog stick means the controls are somewhat simplified, the game has a great multiplayer mode that makes it one of the very best PSP games out there today.

Score: 8.5



Pursuit Force

This sleeper hit from Sony gives you the fun of the missions from *Grand Theft Auto* with none of the downtime. Non-stop, high-speed vehicle combat is what the game is all about, and the cop that you control has all the high flying moves you need to leap from car to car without slowing down. With a variety of vehicles and weapons to use, *Pursuit Force* delivers 100% action from start to finish.

Score: 8.5



Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror

After the sluggish last title in the *Syphon Filter* series, *Omega Strain*, we weren't expecting much from *Dark Mirror*. Boy, were we surprised. The game is not just a port, it was made for the PSP, as is evident from the control scheme, which works well despite the lack of a second analog stick. Nice graphics and fun gameplay only sweeten the deal, making *Dark Mirror* one of the best games out there on PSP.

Score: 8.5

MORE



Black
Score: 8.0

Getting Up:
Contents Under Pressure
Score: 8.0

Shadow Hearts:
From the New World
Score: 8.0



Mega Man Powered Up
Score: 8.5

MLB 2006: The Show
Score: 8.5

Field Commander
Score: 8.0

Ys: ARK of Napishtim
Score: 8.0

Hardware

NEC MultiSync 20WMGX2

PSM SCORE
7.0
out of 10

**A BEAUTIFUL
SCREEN, BUT
NOT FULLY
READY FOR
THE PS3**

NEC's MultiSync 20WMGX2 is a first step by the company to shed some of its business image and appeal to a hipper, multimedia-hungry audience. With a simple and elegant design, available in silver or black, it definitely looks the part. Its screen can also fully display 720p sources (like the upcoming PlayStation 3), and does so with bright saturated colors, and no visible ghosting.

Our biggest gripe with this overall well-rounded monitor is that, when viewing input sources not at its native resolution (meaning every game console released so far other than the Xbox 360), the overall picture is too soft and muddy, making even HD gaming look a generation behind. With no HDMI inputs – the PS3's standard connection – this monitor will better serve your computing, not gaming, needs.

KAISER HWANG

i info	
MADE BY	NEC Electronics
PRICE	\$799.99
DETAILED SPECS	1680x1050, 6ms response time, DVI-D, VGA, S-video, component, composite, 4-port USB hub, integrated speakers

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letters

Letter of the Month



WHY IS GTA ONE OF THE ONLY GAMES THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS COMPLAINING ABOUT?

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Why is *Grand Theft Auto* one of the only games that the government is complaining about? Have they seen games like *BloodRayne 2*, *Leisure Suit Larry*, or even *Postal*? Those are really extreme, but you don't hear politicians complaining about them! I think that the government should look at what other controversial games are on the market today. What are your opinions? —Kidkiwi, *The Internet*



CHRIS: SHHH! Quiet down, man — the government might actually hear you! Like we don't have enough trouble with those clueless rabble-rousers exaggerating about "prostitute murder simulators" and "carjack trainers."

I'm all for keeping adult content out of the hands of children, but if many in the government had their way, nobody would be able to buy M-rated games. If that happens, Kidkiwi, I'm coming into the Internet after you.



WHY THE POLICE MIGHT NOT LIKE GTA You know, because of all the crime and stuff like this...

June's mail...

UH, THEY BROKE UP...

Whatever happened to *Marvel Vs. Capcom 3*? I have been told that it was going to come out for the PS2 and feature Dante and other new characters. Can you tell me if Capcom is working on it, or if there will be no more *Marvel Vs. Capcom* games for us? —Daniel Alvarez, Bell Gardens, CA



JUSTIN: Unfortunately, Dan (can I call you Dan? Too late!), there won't be a *Marvel Vs. Capcom 3* because the *Marvel* license has since moved on to other publishers. So no, you won't see *Devil May Cry*'s Dante fight *Wolverine*, or *RE4*'s Ada fight, uh... *Wolverine*. No, wait — *Spider-Woman*! Yeah, that's even better... Anyway, you and I and all those other *Marvel Vs. Capcom* fans out there will just have to go back and play the old games to get our *Marvel/Capcom* fighting fix. Sigh.

PS2 + LINUX = ?

I've seen PS2 Linux kits online — what does having Linux on your PS2 do? What would I need to get my PS2 running Linux (or any other OS)? —Erik Wickstrom, Kenmore, WA



RANDY: Sony released the PlayStation 2 Linux kit for people interested in making their own software and games for PS2 (the kit consisted of a hard disk drive with a variant of the Linux operating system installed, a keyboard, mouse, and VGA cable). It essentially turned the PS2 into a basic computer. Sony had done something similar, but to a lesser extent, with the Net Yaroze PlayStation hack in the day. You already answered the second question yourself, Erik; you need to get a PS2 Linux kit. Nice as it would be, Linux, Windows XP and Mac OSX don't run on a normal PS2 console.

Check out
gamesradar
—it's cool.



SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK

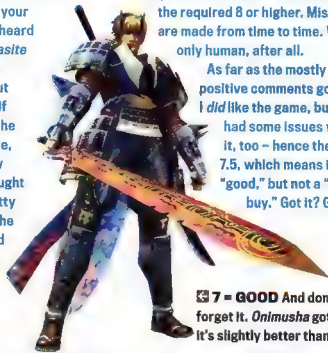
I'm writing you guys because I haven't seen anything about a *Parasite Eve 3* videogame. I don't care if it's on the PS2 or PS3 - I just want it in my living room. They brought Lara back in *Tomb Raider Legend*; why can't they bring Aya and Eve back in a great new epic?

If you've heard anything that might help me find the satisfaction that I need, I would be so pleased. Thanks for the magazine, guys; keep kicking ass! -Michael Dickson, Alexandria, VA



JUSTIN: Oh, Michael, we shall indeed keep kicking ass...

and we shall indeed keep answering questions, too. So here is the answer to your question: we haven't heard anything about a *Parasite Eve* revival. Sorry we can't tell you more, but we really don't know if there's something in the works or not. I, for one, would welcome a new *Parasite Eve*, as I thought both games were pretty cool. While we're on the subject of reviving old franchises, someone should bring back *Valkyrie Wilder*. Who's with me?



MISTAKES WERE MADE

I have a quick question regarding your review of *Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams*. The score does not match up with the comments that you had about the game; you only gave it a 7.5 but listed very few cons and wrote a lot of good things about it. Furthermore, you gave it the "Buy or Die" award, which is supposed to be reserved for 8s and up. Is this a misprint, or do you really consider it a 7.5? -Jonathan Anderson, The Internet



JUSTIN: Yes, Jonathan Anderson of The Internet (do you know Kidkiwi?), we did make a mistake: *Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams* should have received a "Buy or Die" award, as it did not get the required 8 or higher. Mistakes are made from time to time. We're only human, after all.

As far as the mostly positive comments go, I did like the game, but I had some issues with it, too - hence the 7.5, which means it's "good," but not a "must buy." Got it? Good.

7 = GOOD And don't you forget it. *Onimusha* got a 7.5, so it's slightly better than "good!"

NO LAUGHING MATTER

There were a number of things that I think could have been your April Fool's joke, like the grade for *Getting Up* (an 8 for that?), or it could have been that there's a game called *Samurai Champloo* (although I figured it was real after seeing an ad for it). It came down to your story about the PSP playing N64 games or *LocoRoco*. So, my pick for the joke is... *Okami*. Just kidding - I only wish that game wasn't real.

I believe that the real joke is *LocoRoco*. It seems like a game for the catatonic, it's insane, and it's not weird enough for Japanese players. -JZ Zaranka, Rahway, NJ



JUSTIN: Nope, the real April Fool's joke was that *Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams* got a "Buy or Die" award when it rated a 7.5. Oh, wait, I already admitted that was a mistake... In that case, the April Fool's joke is that there was no April Fool's joke. *Getting Up* did get an 8; there is a game (and anime!) called *Samurai Champloo*; the PSP can play emulated N64 games; *Okami* is awesome (why do you wish it wasn't real?); and *LocoRoco* actually exists. Sorry to burst your bubble, JZ (like the rapper?), but we haven't had an April Fool's joke for a very long time. Why? Well, let's just say you can thank *Valkyrie Wilder* for that.

What a LOAD of SHIRT!

Bleh, blah, blah, blah.
(Thanks a lot to PSM!)

we print your letter,

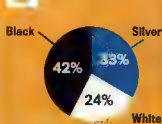
you get this special shirt, made only for you letter writers!

So REMEMBER to include your STREET ADDRESS. We can't e-mail them.

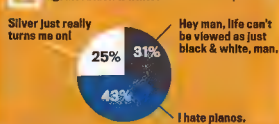
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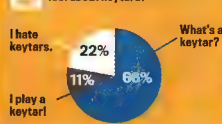
Which PS3 color is best?



If you picked silver: What do you have against black & white?



If you hate pianos: how do you feel about keytars?



The DATA SUGGESTS:

People who will buy silver PS3's are ignorant of keytars.



Visit www.psonline.com to answer our poll questions.



June's mail...Hot Topic!

PSP WOES

The PSP is a nice piece of hardware that can run some cool homebrew software. Unfortunately, it can also be pretty complicated, as these readers can attest.

I INSTALLED PSRADIO (WITH SOME DIFFICULTY AND FRUSTRATION), BUT IT FREEZES EVERY TIME I LAUNCH IT —Greg Repass, GA

I AM HAVING PROBLEMS WITH THE SUPER NES EMULATOR —Nate, The Internet

WHEN I FIRST UPDATED MY PSP TO GET THE INTERNET BROWSER, IT SAID SOMETHING ABOUT VIRUSES. IS IT POSSIBLE TO GET VIRUSES? —JP Petrotta, Alta Loma, CA

I WENT TO ITUNES, DOWNLOADED SOME SONGS &, LO AND BEHOLD, I CAN'T PUT THEM ONTO MY PSP —Michael Emes, Kunkletown PA



The PSM Take:

RANDY: If there's one thing that everyone can agree on regarding the PSP — other than the fact that it's great to see the game lineup improving and expanding — it's that getting video and homebrew software onto it is a hassle at best. Sony's media manager program is good, but overall the free alternative, PSP Video 8, wins for ease of use. When it comes to running emulators and other software on your PSP, it's obvious that it's something that Sony didn't want people doing, because it's not easy. Realize that many of the apps are made by someone in their spare time, and can't be expected to be bug-free. If you've gone to the right places for the programs, such as pspupdates.com, they have forums full of helpful folks to get you over installation hurdles. It's all relatively safe, but yes, unscrupulous people have already released "viruses" masquerading as homebrew apps. Getting a virus from using the PSP's built-in browser, however, isn't something to worry about.



(What Would Justin Do?)

Dear Justin, You know when you're playing a game, but then you really have to scratch your face, but you don't want to do it because it might mess you up, and you're afraid that, even if you pause it first, it still might mess you up? What do you do?
—Lester Gada, Beaumont, TX

JUSTIN: Learn to overcome your fear and just pause the game, so you can investigate the itchiness. Then, as long as it won't cause more harm, scratch the itch and ease your suffering. Your own personal well-being is far more important than playing a game. Seriously.

Caption Contest: Make us laugh, win a prize.

THINK YOU'RE FUNNY?

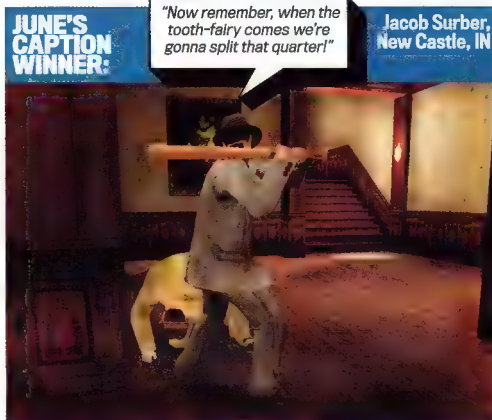


WRITE A CAPTION FOR THIS



Here's How

Write a caption for this screen and e-mail it to psm@futureus-inc.com with the subject line "T11 Caption Contest!" THE DEADLINE IS JULY 1ST. If we choose your caption as the funniest, it'll net you a PSM Prize Package, so include your full name and mailing address!



"Now remember, when the tooth-fairy comes we're gonna split that quarter!"

Jacob Surber,
New Castle, IN



The Big Contest: Ultimate PSP Collection

How To Enter

1

2

3



WHAT YOU GET

Burnout Legends
 Dexter
 Exit
 Field Commander
 FIFA '06
 Fight Night Round 3
 GTA: Liberty City Stories
 Hot Shots Golf Open Tee
 Infected
 Lumines
 Madden NFL 2006
 Mega Man Maverick
 Hunter X
 Mega Man Powered Up
 Metal Gear ACID
 Metal Gear ACID 2
 MLB 2006: The Show
 Namco Museum Battle
 Collection
 NBA Live '06
 NFL Street 2 Unleashed
 Prince of Persia:
 Revelations
 Pursuit Force
 Ridge Racer
 SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo
 Street Fighter Alpha 3 MAX
 Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror
 Tiger Woods PGA Tour '06
 Twisted Metal: Head-On
 Virtua Tennis: World Tour
 Winning Eleven 9
 Wipeout Pure
 WWE SmackDown! Vs.
 RAW 2006
 X-Men Legends II: Rise of
 Apocalypse
 Ys: Ark of Napishtim

The Legal Stuff

The PSM Editors will pick the winning story based on the following criteria: the severity of the situation, the creativity shown in overcoming it, and humor. One entry total per individual. All entries must be received no later than July 1, 2006, with the winner being announced in or around the October issue. Each of the judging criteria will be weighed equally at 33%. By entering this contest, you agree that Future US, Inc. may use your name, likeness, and web site for promotional purposes without further payment. All prizes will be awarded and no minimum number of entries is required. Prizes won by minors will be awarded to their parents or legal guardians. Future US is not responsible for damages or expenses that the winners might incur as a result of the Contest or the receipt of a prize, and winners are responsible for income taxes based on the value of the prizes received. A list of winners may also be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Future US, Inc., c/o PSM June PSP Contest, 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. This contest is limited to residents of the United States. No purchase necessary; void in Arizona, Maryland, Vermont, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law.



Fandom: Above and beyond the call...

LEGO ART



LEGO-KATAMARI & METAL GEAR? Heck yes! Ron LeFevre makes LEGO versions of games and many other things. Check out www.brickflick.com for much more.



SKETCH



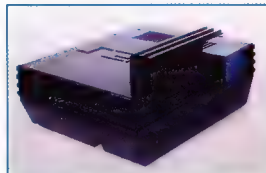
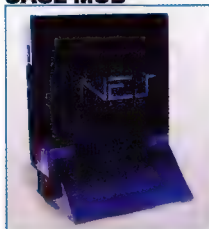
SPOILER ALERT! FFVII art by Robert Dawson of Searsport, ME.

CAT... UH, ART?



WAIT FOR IT... Catamar! We found this photo of (wait for it...) catsplay by Mario Garza at www.stuffonmycat.com.

CASE MOD



NES, PS2-STYLE Check out this NESTation case mod by Kotomi! at kotomiblog.blogspot.com/2006/02/nestation.html.

FUNNY FLASH ANIMATION

Go Watch: Crab Battle!

www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/239227

Cris Mertens and Christopher Boe (www.boe-entertainment.com) have made a hilarious little animated movie wherein Snake and a Kenyan Mangrove Crab face off in an intensely violent battle. The (kinda "R" rated) dialogue is worth it alone. "Crab battle!"



SEND US STUFF!

Send your displays of fandom to us at websites, custom toys, cosplay... we want it all! The best stuff will be displayed here every issue!

with "Fandom" in the subject line. Art, cosplay, etc.

FINAL FANATICS

The PS2's RPG opus gets ported to the NES... kind of

Reportedly, a team of Japanese hackers took a copy of the *Final Fantasy II* (the Japanese version, duh) ROM and modified it, making an NES-style *Final Fantasy X*. Unfortunately, as of this writing, the site (<http://www.usamimi.info/%7Eff10fc/>) has disappeared, but here's what the game looked like.



WHO NEEDS FANCY PS2 GRAPHICS? Sure, this game doesn't look quite as good, but it has its charm.



PC ONLY Unfortunately, it's only playable on PC, so you won't be playing this on your NES or even your PS2.

ONE OF THE TOP FIVE GAME-DEGREE PROGRAMS

—Electronic Gaming Monthly



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Francisco Cruz

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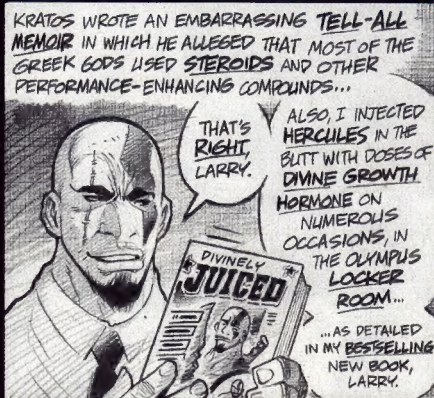
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Why Kratos was REALLY kicked out of Olympus



Next Month in PSM

It took us so long to get this redesign issue done that we considered taking next month off... but then a monster cover exclusive fell into our laps, and we just had to get back to work. Get ready for a shocker that you never expected...



Zounds! I had no **CLUE** it would be so astonishing!

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www.untoldlegends.com



PSP
PlayStation Portable



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